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THOUGHTS

ON

THE IMPORTANCE

OF THE

MANNERS OF THE GREAT

TO

GENERAL SOCIETY.

"You are the Makers of Manners."

SHAKESPEARE.

THOUGHTS

ON THE

MANNERS OF THE GREAT.

To a large and honourable claſs of the community, to perſons conſiderable in reputation, important by their condition in life, and commendable for the decency of their general conduct, theſe ſlight hints are reſpectfully addreſſed. They are not intended as a ſatire upon vice, or a ridicule upon folly, being written neither for the fooliſh nor the vicious. The ſubject is too ſerious for ridicule; and thoſe to whom it is addreſſed are too reſpectable for ſatire. It is recommended to the conſideration of thoſe who, filling the higher ranks in life,

are naturally regarded as patterns, by which the manners of the reſt of the world are to be faſhioned.

The maſs of mankind, in moſt places, and eſpecially in thoſe conditions of life which exempt them from the temptation to ſhameful vices, is perhaps chiefly compoſed of what is commonly termed by the courteſey of the world *good kind of people*; for perſons of very flagitious wickedneſs are almoſt as rare as thoſe of very eminent piety. To the latter of theſe, admonition were impertinent; to the former it were ſuperfluous. Theſe remarks, therefore, are principally written with a view to thoſe perſons of rank and fortune who live within the reſtraints of moral obligation, and acknowledge the truth of the Chriſtian religion; and who, if in certain inſtances they allow themſelves in practices not compatible with a ſtrict profeſſion of Chriſtianity, ſeem to do it rather from habit and want of reflection, than either from diſbelief of its doctrines, or contempt of its precepts.

Inconſideration, Faſhion, and the World, are three confederates againſt Virtue, with whom even good kind of people often contrive to live on excellent terms: and the fair reputation which may be obtained by a complaiſant conformity to the prevailing practice, and by mere decorum of manners, without a ſtrict attention to religious principle, is a conſtant ſource of danger to the rich and great. There is ſomething almoſt irreſiſtibly ſeducing in the contagion of general example: hence the neceſſity of that vigilance, which it is the buſineſs of Chriſtianity to quicken by inceſſant admonition, and which it is the buſineſs of the world, to lay aſleep by the perpetual opiates of eaſe and pleaſure.

A fair reputation is among the laudable objects of human ambition; yet even this really valuable bleſſing is ſometimes converted into a ſnare, by inducing a treacherous ſecurity as ſoon as it is obtained; and by leading him who is too anxious about obtaining it, to ſtop ſhort without aiming

at a higher motive of action. A fatal indolence is apt to creep in upon the soul when it has once acquired the good opinion of mankind, if the acquisition of that good opinion was the ultimate end of its endeavours. Pursuit is at an end when the object is in possession; for he is not likely to "press forward" who thinks he has already "attained." The love of worldly reputation, and the desire of God's favour, have this specific difference, that in the latter, the possession always augments the desire; and the spiritual mind accounts nothing done while any thing remains undone.

But after all, a fair fame, the support of numbers, and the flattering concurrence of human opinion, is obviously a deceitful dependance; for as every individual must die for himself, and answer for himself, both these imaginary resources will fail, just at the moment when they could have been of any use. A good reputation, even without internal piety, would be

worth

worth obtaining, if the tribunal of heaven were faſhioned after the manner of human courts of judicature. If at the general judgment we were to be tried by a jury of our fellow mortals, it would be but common prudence to ſecure their favour at any price. But it can ſtand us in little ſtead in the great day of deciſion, it being the conſummation of infinite goodneſs not to abandon us to the mercy of each other's ſentence; but to reſerve us for *his* final judgment who knows every motive of every action; who will make ſtrict inquiſition into ſingleneſs of heart, and uprightneſs of intention: in whoſe eyes the ſincere prayer of powerleſs benevolence will outweigh the moſt ſplendid profeſſion, or the moſt dazzling action.

We cannot but rejoice in every degree of human virtue which operates favourably on ſociety, whatever be the motive, or whoever be the actor; and we ſhould gladly commend every degree of goodneſs, though it be not exactly ſquared by our own rules

 and

and notions. Even the good actions of ſuch perſons as are too much actuated by a regard to appearances, are not without their beneficial effects. The righteouſneſs of thoſe who occupy this middle region of morality among us, certainly exceeds the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees; for they are not only exact in ceremonials, but in many reſpects fulfil the weightier matters of law and conſcience. Like Herod, they often "hear gladly," and "do many "things." Yet I am afraid I ſhall be thought ſevere in remarking that, in general, thoſe characters in the New Teſtament, of whoſe future condition no very comfortable hope is given, ſeem to have been taken, not from the profligate, the abandoned, and the diſhonourable; but from that decent claſs commonly deſcribed by the term of *good ſort of people*; that mixed kind of character in which virtue appears, if it do not predominate. The young Ruler was certainly one of the firſt of this order; and yet we are left in dark uncertainty as to his final

final allotment. The rich man who built him barns and ſtorehouſes, and only propoſed to himſelf the full enjoyment of that fortune, which we do not hear was unfairly acquired, might have been, for all that appears to the contrary, a *very good ſort of man;* at leaſt, if we may judge of him by multitudes who live preciſely for the ſame purpoſes, and yet enjoy a good degree of credit, and who are rather conſidered as objects of reſpect, than of cenſure. His plan, like theirs, was "to take his eaſe, to "eat, drink, and be merry."

But the moſt alarming inſtance is that of the ſplendid epicure, who was cloathed in purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day. He committed no enormities that have been tranſmitted to us; for that he dined well and dreſſed well, could hardly incur the bitter penalty of eternal miſery. That his expences were ſuitable to his ſtation, and his ſplendour proportioned to his opulence, does not exhibit any objection to his character. Nor are we told

that he refuſed the crumbs which Lazarus ſolicited. And yet this man, on an authority which we are not permitted to queſtion, is repreſented, in a future ſtate, as *lifting up his eyes being in torments*. His puniſhment ſeems to have been the conſequence of an irreligious, a worldly ſpirit, a heart corrupted by the ſoftneſſes and delights of life. It was not becauſe he was rich, but becauſe he truſted in riches; or, if even he was charitable, his charity wanted that principle which alone could ſanctify it. His views terminated here; this world's good, and this world's applauſe, were the motives and the end of his actions. He forgot God; he was deſtitute of piety; and the abſence of this great and firſt principle of human actions rendered his ſhining deeds, however they might be admired among men, of no value in the ſight of God.

There is no error more common, or more dangerous, than the notion that an unreſtrained indulgence of pleaſure, and an unbounded

bounded gratification of the appetites is generally attended with a liberal, humane, and merciful temper. Nor is there any opinion more falſe and more fatal, or which demands to be more ſteadily controverted, than that libertiniſm and good-nature are natural and neceſſary aſſociates. For after all that corrupt poets, and more corrupt philoſophers, have told us of the blandiſhments of pleaſure, and of its tendency to ſoften the temper and humanize the affections, it is certain, that nothing hardens the heart like exceſſive and unbounded luxury; and he who refuſes the feweſt gratifications to his own voluptuouſneſs, will generally be found the leaſt ſuſceptible of tenderneſs for the wants of others. In one reign the cruelties at Rome bore an exact proportion to the diſſoluteneſs at Capreæ. And in another it is not leſs notorious, that the Imperial fiddler became more barbarous, as he grew more profligate. Proſperity, ſays the Arabian proverb, fills the heart till it makes it hard; and the moſt

dangerous pits and ſnares for human virtue are thoſe, which are ſo covered over with the flowers of proſperous fortune, that it requires a cautious foot, and a vigilant eye, to eſcape them.

Ananias and Saphira were, perhaps, well eſteemed in ſociety; for it was enough to eſtabliſh a very conſiderable reputation to ſell even part of their poſſeſſions for religious purpoſes: but what an alarm does it ſound to hypocriſy, that, inſtead of being rewarded for what they brought, they were puniſhed for what they kept back! And it is to be feared, that this deceitful pair are not the only one, upon whom a good action, without a pure intention, has drawn down a righteous retribution.

Outward actions are the ſureſt, and, indeed, to human eyes the only evidences of ſincerity, but Chriſtianity is a religion of *motives* and *principles*. The Goſpel is continually referring to the *heart*, as the ſource of good; it is to the poor in *ſpirit*, to the pure in *heart*, that the divine bleſſing is an-

nexed,

nexed. A man may correct many improper practices, and refrain from many immoral actions, from merely human motives; but, though this partial amendment is not without its uses, yet this is only attacking symptoms, and neglecting the mortal disease. But to subdue a worldly temper, to control irregular desires, and to have "a clean heart," is to attack sin in its strong holds. Totally to *accomplish* this, is, perhaps, beyond the narrow limits of human perfection, the best men being constantly humbled to find, that when they "would do good evil is present with them;" but to *attempt* it, with an humble reliance on superior aid, is so far from being an extravagant or romantic flight of virtue, that it is but the common duty of every ordinary Christian. And this perfection is not the less real, because it is a point which seems constantly to recede from our approaches, just as the sensible horizon recedes from our natural eye. Our highest attainments, instead of bringing us, "to the

"mark,"

"mark," only teach us that the mark is at a greater diſtance, by giving us more humbling views of ourſelves, and more exalted conceptions of the ſtate after which we are labouring. Though the progreſs towards perfection may be perpetual in this world, the actual attainment is reſerved for a better. And this reſtleſs deſire of a happineſs which we cannot reach, and this lively idea of a perfection which we cannot attain, are among the many arguments for a future ſtate, which ſeem to come little ſhort of demonſtration. The humble chriſtian takes refuge under the deep ſenſe of his diſappointments and defects, in this conſoling hope, "When I awake up after thy like- "neſs I ſhall be ſatisfied."

Let me not here be miſunderſtood as undervaluing the virtues which even worldly men may poſſeſs. I am charmed with humanity, generoſity, and integrity, in whomſoever they may be found. But one virtue muſt not intrench upon another. Charity muſt not ſupplant faith. If a man be generous,

nerous, good-natured, and humane, it is impoſſible not to feel for him the tenderneſs of a brother; but if, at the ſame time, he be irreligious, intemperate, or profane, who ſhall dare to ſay he is in a ſafe ſtate? Good humour, and generous ſentiments will always make a man a pleaſant acquaintance; but who ſhall lower the doctrines of the Goſpel, to accommodate them to the conduct of men? Who ſhall bend a ſtrait rule, to favour a crooked practice? Who ſhall controvert that authority which has ſaid, that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord?*

May I venture to be a little paradoxical; and while ſo many grave perſons are deſcanting on the miſchiefs of vice, may I be permitted to ſay a word on the miſchiefs of virtue, or, rather, of that ſhining counterfeit, which, while it wants the ſpecific gravity, has much of the brightneſs of ſterling worth? Never, perhaps, did any age produce more beautiful declamations in praiſe of virtue than the preſent; never

were more poliſhed periods rounded in honour of humanity. An antient Pagan would imagine that Aſtrea had returned to take up her abode in our metropolis; a primitive Chriſtian would conclude, that "righteouſneſs and peace had there met together." But how would they be ſurpriſed to find that the obligation to theſe duties was not always thought binding, not only on the reader but on their eloquent encomiaſts themſelves. How would they be ſurpriſed to find that univerſal benevolence may ſubſiſt with partial injuſtice, and boundleſs liberality with ſordid ſelfiſhneſs! that a man may ſeem eager in redreſſing the injuries of half the globe, without deſcending to the petty detail of private virtues; and burn with zeal for the good of millions he never ſaw, while he is ſpreading vice and ruin through the little circle of his own perſonal influence!

When the general texture of an irregular life is ſpangled over with ſome conſtitutional pleaſing

pleaſing qualities; when gaiety, good humour, and a thoughtleſs profuſion of expence, throw a luſtre round the faultieſt characters, it is no wonder that common obſervers are blinded into admiration; a profuſe generoſity dazzles *them* more than all the duties of the decalogue. But though it may be a very good electioneering virtue, yet there are many qualities which may obtain popularity among men, which do not tend to ſecure the favour of God. It is ſomewhat ſtrange that the extravagance of the great ſhould be the criterion of their goodneſs with thoſe very people who are themſelves the victims to this idol; for the prodigal pays no debts if he can help it: and it is a notorious inſtance of the danger of theſe popular virtues, and of the falſe judgments of men, that in one of the wittieſt and moſt popular comedies* which this country has ever produced, thoſe very paſſages which exalt liberality and turn juſtice into ridicule, were nightly applauded

* The School for Scandal.

with

with enthuſiaſtic rapture by thoſe deluded tradeſmen, whom, perhaps, that very ſentiment helped to keep out of their money.

There is another ſort of faſhionable character, whoſe falſe brightneſs is ſtill more pernicious, by caſting a ſplendour over the moſt deſtructive vices. Corrupt manners, ruinous extravagance, and the moſt fatal paſſion for play, are ſometimes gilded over with many engaging acts of charity, and a general attention and reſpect to the ceremonials of Religion. But this is degrading the venerable image and ſuperſcription of Chriſtianity, by ſtamping them on a baſer metal than they were ever intended to impreſs. The young and gay ſhelter themſelves under ſuch examples, and ſcruple the leſs to adopt the bad parts of ſuch mixed characters, when they ſee that a looſe and negligent, not to ſay immoral conduct, is ſo compatible with a religious profeſſion.

But I digreſs from my intention; for it is not the purpoſe of this addreſs to take

notice

notice of any actions which the common consent of mankind has determined to be wrong: but of such chiefly as are practised by the sober, the decent, and the regular; and to drop a few hints on such less obvious offences as are, in general,

Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne.

Nor will the bounds which I have prescribed myself allow of my wandering into a wide and general field of observation.

The idea of the present slight performance was suggested by reading the King's late excellent proclamation against irreligion and immorality *. Under the shelter of so high a sanction, it may not be unseasonable to press on the hearts of the better disposed, such observances as seem to be generally overlooked, and to remark such offences as commonly elude censure, because they are not commonly thought censurable.

* This Tract was written soon after the institution of the society for enforcing the King's proclamation against vice and irreligion.

It is obvious to all pious perſons, that that branch of the divine law, againſt which the better kind of people treſpaſs with the leaſt ſcruple, is the fourth commandment. Many who would ſhudder at the violation of the other nine, ſeem without ceremony to expunge this from the divine code; but by what authority they do this, has never been explained. The Chriſtian legiſlator does not ſeem to have abridged the commandments; and there is no ſubſequent authority ſo much as pretended to by Proteſtants.

It is not here intended to take notice of ſuch flagrant offences as lie open to the cognizance of higher tribunals; or to pollute this paper with deſcanting on the holders of card aſſemblies on Sundays; the frequenters of taverns and gaming houſes; the printers of Sunday newſpapers; the proprietors of Sunday ſtage coaches; and others who openly inſult the laws of the land; laws which will always be held ſacred by

by good ſubjects, even were not the law of God antecedent to them.

Many of the order whom I here addreſs are perſons of the tendereſt humanity, and not only wiſh well to the intereſts of virtue, but are favourably diſpoſed to advance the cauſe of religion; nay, would be extremely ſtartled at not being thought ſincerely religious: yet from inconſideration, want of time, want of ſelf-examination, want of a juſt ſenſe of the high requirements of the Divine law, want of ſuſpecting the deceitfulneſs of the human heart, ſometimes allow themſelves in inattentions and negligences which materially affect their own ſafety, and the comfort of others.—While an animated ſpirit of charity ſeems to be kindled among us: while there is a general diſpoſition to inſtruct the ignorant, and to reform the vicious; we cannot help regretting that theſe amiable exertions ſhould be counteracted, in ſome degree, by practices of a directly oppoſite tendency; trifling in their appearance, but ſerious in their effects.

There are ſtill among us petty domeſtic evils, which ſeem too inconſiderable to claim redreſs. There is an aggrieved body of men in our very capital, whoſe ſpiritual hardſhips ſeem ſcarcely to have been taken into conſideration, I mean the HAIR DRESSERS, on whom

The Sunday ſhines, no day of reſt to them.

Is there not a peculiar degree of unkindneſs in exerciſing ſuch cruelty on the ſouls of men, whoſe whole lives are employed in embelliſhing our perſons? And is it quite conceivable how a lady's conſcience is able to make ſuch nice diſtinctions, that ſhe would be ſhocked at the idea of ſending for her mantua-maker* or milliner, her carpenter or maſon, on a Sunday, while ſhe makes no ſcruple regularly to employ a hair dreſſer?

Is it not almoſt ridiculous to obſerve the zeal we have for doing good at a diſtance,

* It is feared that ſince theſe pages were written the ſcruple of ſending for either is much diminiſhed.

while we neglect the little, obvious, every-day, domeftic duties, which fhould feem to folicit our immediate attention? But an action ever fo right and praife-worthy which is only to be periodically performed, at diftant intervals, is lefs burthenfome to corrupt nature, than an undeviating attention to fuch fmall, conftant, right habits as are hoftile to our natural indolence, and would be perpetually vexing and difturbing our felf-love. The weak heart indulges its infirmity, by allowing itfelf intermediate omiffions, and habitual neglects of duty; repofing itfelf for fafety, on regular but remote returns of ftated performances. It is lefs trouble to fubfcribe to the propagation of the Gofpel in foreign parts, than to have daily prayers in our own families; and I am perfuaded that there are multitudes of well-meaning people who would gladly contribute to a miffion of Chriftianity to Japan or Otaheite, to whom it never occurred that the hair-dreffer, whom they are every Sunday detaining from church, has a

 foul

ſoul to be ſaved; that the law of the land co-operates with the law of God, to forbid their employing him; and that they have no right, either legal or moral, to this portion of his time. The poor man himſelf, perhaps, dares not remonſtrate, for fear he ſhould be deprived of his employment for the reſt of the week. If there were no other objection to a pleaſurable Sunday among the great and affluent, methinks this ſingle one might operate: would not a devout heart be unwilling to rob a fellow-creature of his time for devotion, or a humane one of his hour of reſt? "Love "worketh no ill to his neighbour, there-"fore love is the fulfilling of the Law."

It is ſtrange that there ſhould be ſo little conſiſtency in human conduct, that the ſame perſons ſhould gladly contribute to ſpread the light of Chriſtianity in another hemiſphere; while, by their example, they actually obſtruct the progreſs of it at home. But it is, I doubt not, much oftener owing to the imperceptible influence of cuſtom and

and habit, than to a decided ill intention. Befides, it may be in morals as it is in optics, the eye and the object may come too clofe to each other, to anfwer the end of vifion. There are certain faults which prefs too near our felf-love to be even perceptible to us.

The petty mifchief of what is called *card money*, is fo affimilated to our habits, and interwoven with our family arrangements, that even many of the prudent and the virtuous no longer confider it as a worm which is feeding on the vitals of domeftic virtue. How many poor youths, after having been trained in a wholefome dread of idlenefs and gaming, when they are fent abroad into the world, are aftonifhed to find that part of the wages of the fervant is to be paid by his furnifhing the implements of diverfion for the guefts of the mafter. Thus good fervants are a commodity which has long been diminifhing by an elaborate fyftem. The more fober the family, the fewer attractions it muft neceffarily have;

 for

for theſe ſervants will naturally quit a place, however excellent, where there is no play, for one where there is ſome; and a family where there is but little, for one where there is much. Thus if the advantage of the dependent is to increaſe in a direct ratio to the diſſipation of his employer, what encouragement is left for valuable ſervants, or what proſpect remains of ſecuring valuable ſervants for ſober-minded families?

It will be ſaid, that ſo ſmall an evil is ſcarcely worth inſiſting on. But a ſmall fault, which is become a part of a ſyſtem, in time eſtabliſhes an error into a principle. And that remonſtrance which ſhould induce people to aboliſh one wrong habit, or pluck out one rooted error, however trifling, would be of more real uſe than the moſt eloquent declamation againſt vice in general. To take out only one thorn from a ſuffering patient is more beneficial to him than the moſt elaborate diſquiſition on the pain he is ſuffering from the thorns which remain.

It

It ſhould be held as an eternal truth, that what is morally wrong can never be politically right. It would be arguing great ignorance of human nature, and exacting a very rigorous degree of virtue from a perſon of vulgar ſentiments to expect that he ſhould wiſh well to the intereſts of ſobriety, or heartily deſire the decreaſe of diſſipation, while the growth of it is made ſo profitable to himſelf. It is requiring too much to make the temptation ſo forcible where the power of reſiſtance is ſo weak. To hold out to a poor fellow the ſtrong ſeduction of intereſt, and yet to expect he will retain the ſame inflexible principle, is to expect from an illiterate ſervant an elevation of virtue, which has not always been found even in ſtateſmen and miniſters.

It is not here intended to enter into any animadverſion on the ſubject of play itſelf. But may we not aſk, without offence, if it be perfectly right to introduce any money ariſing from or connected with it, into a part of regular family œconomy? Is it not

not giving an air of ſyſtem to diverſion, which does not ſeem entirely of a piece with the other orderly practices of many diſcreet families where this odd traffic is carried on? Would not our anceſtors, who ſeem to have underſtood œconomy and magnificence too, at leaſt as well as their deſcendants, have been ſcandalized had it been propoſed to them to incorporate play ſo intimately with the texture of their domeſtic arrangements, as that it ſhould make part of their plan? And would they have thought it a very dignified practice not to have paid themſelves for the amuſements of their own houſes; but to have invited their friends to an entertainment of of which the gueſts were to defray part of the expence?

Let me ſuppoſe a caſe: what appearance would it have, if every gentleman who has partaken of the ſocial entertainment of a friend's table, were, after dinner, expected by the butler, to leave a piece of money under his plate to pay for his wine?

Do

Do not common ſenſe, hoſpitality, friendſhip, and liberal feelings revolt at the bare ſuggeſtion of ſuch a project? Yet there is in effect as little hoſpitality, as little friendſhip, and as little liberality in being obliged to pay for the cards as for the wine; both equally making a part of the entertainment.

It is hardly too ludicrous to add, that ſeeing how this point has been carried in favour of the groom of the chambers (and it deſcends down to the loweſt footman), we need not deſpair of ſeeing the butler inſiſt on being allowed to furniſh the wine, for which he ſhall compel the gueſts to pay with the ſame high intereſt with which they now pay for the cards. It will ſeem odd at firſt, but afterwards we ſhall think no more about it, to ſee him, during dinner, noting down thoſe who drink the more coſtly wines, that they may be taxed double. And it will ſound whimſical *at firſt*, to hear the butler give his maſter notice that he

muſt

muſt quit his place, becauſe the company have drank little wine. This only ſounds ridiculous, while the leaving a place thro' deficiency of card money ſounds reaſonable, becauſe we are accuſtomed to the one, and the other is not yet become faſhionable.

The extinction of this favorite perquiſite would at firſt be conſidered as a violent innovation. All reformations ſeem formidable before they are attempted. The cuſtom of *vails*, "which gave corruption "*broader* wings to fly," was ſuppoſed to be invincible. Yet how ſoon did a general concurrence exterminate it! Had any one foretold twenty years ago, that in a very ſhort ſpace near half a million of pilfering, ſwearing, ſabbath breaking children, ſhould be reſcued from the ſtreets, and brought into habits of ſobriety and virtue, ſhould we not have laughed to ſcorn the ſpiritual Hercules, who would have undertaken that the cleanſing ſtream of religious inſtruction ſhould

ſhould thus be poured through the Augean ſtable of ignorance and vice, and in ſome meaſure waſh away its groſſeſt impurities?

The ſervant would probably complain of the annihilation of this gainful cuſtom: but the maſter would find his account in indemnifying the loſs; for he in his turn would be releaſed from the prepoſterous contribution to the wages of other men's ſervants. If in a family of overgrown diſſipation the ſtated addition ſhould not be found equivalent to the relinquiſhed perquiſite, the ſervant muſt heroically ſubmit to the diſadvantageous commutation for the public good. And after all it would be no very ſerious grievance if his reduced income ſhould not then exceed that of the Chaplain. It will ſtill at leaſt exceed that of many a deſerving gentleman, bred to liberal learning, whoſe feelings that learning has refined to a painful acuteneſs, and who is withering away in hopeleſs penury with a large family, on a Curacy, but little ſurpaſſing the wages of a livery ſervant.

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The ſame principle in human nature by which the nabob, the contractor, and others, by a ſudden influx of unaccuſtomed wealth, become voluptuous, extravagant, and inſolent, ſeldom fails to produce the ſame effect on perſons in theſe humbler ſtations, when raiſed from inferior places to the ſudden affluence of theſe gainful ones. Increaſed profligacy on a ſudden ſwell of fortune is commonly followed by deſperate methods to improve the circumſtances when impaired by the improvidence attending unaccuſtomed proſperity.

There is another domeſtic practice which it is almoſt idle to mention, becauſe it is ſo difficult to redreſs, ſince ſuch is the preſent ſtate of ſociety that even the conſcientious think themſelves obliged to concur in it. That ingenuity which could deviſe ſome effectual ſubſtitute for the daily and hourly lie of *Not at home*, would deſerve well of ſociety. Why will not ſome of thoſe illuſtrious ladies who lead in the faſhionable world invent ſome phraſe which ſhall

equally

equally refcue from deftruction the time of the mafter and the veracity of the fervant? Some new and appropriate expreflion, the not adopting which fhould be blended with the ftigma of vulgarity, might accomplifh that which the charge of its being immoral has failed to accomplifh.

The expediency of the denial itfelf, no one will difpute, who has a juft idea of the value of time. Some fcrupulous perfons fo very much difpute the lawfulnefs of making their fervants' tongue the medium of any kind of falfehood, as to make it a point of confcience rather to lay themfelves open to the irruption of every idle invader, who fallies out on morning vifits bent on the deftruction of bufinefs and the annihilation of ftudy. People of very ftrict integrity lament that this practice induces a general fpirit of lying, mixes itfelf with the habit, and by a quality, the reverfe of an alterative, gradually undermines the moral conftitution.— Others on the contrary affert, that this is one of thofe lies of convention, no more in-

tended

tended to deceive, than the *dear ſir* at the beginning, or your *humble ſervant* at the cloſe of a letter to a perſon who is not dear to you, and to whom you owe no ſubjection. There is, however, this very material difference, that if the firſt be a falſehood, you do not convey it by proxy: You uſe it yourſelf, and you uſe it to one who ſets no more value on your words than you intended he ſhould; and who ſhews you he does not, by uſing the ſame ſtated phraſe in return, in addreſſing you, for whom he cares as little. Here the words paſs for no more than they are worth.

The ill effects of the cuſtom we are lamenting may be traced in marking the gradual initiation of an unpractiſed country ſervant. And who has not felt for his virtuous diſtreſs, when he has been ordered to call back a more favoured viſitant, whom he had juſt ſent away with the aſſurance that his lady was not at home? Who has not ſeen his ſuppreſſed indignation at being obliged to become himſelf the detector of that falſe-

hood

hood of which he had been before the inſtrument? But a little practice, and a repetition of reproof for even daring to *look* honeſt, ſoon cures this fault, eſpecially as he is ſure to be commended, in proportion to the increaſed firmneſs of his voice, and the ſteadineſs of his countenance.

If this evil, petty as it may ſeem to be, be really without a remedy; if the ſtate of ſociety be ſuch that it cannot be redreſſed, let us not be ſo unreaſonable as to expect that a ſervant will equivocate in ſmall inſtances and not in great ones. To hope that he will always lie for your convenience, and never for his own, is perhaps expecting more from human nature in a low and uncultivated ſtate than we have any right to expect. Nor ſhould the maſter look for undeviating and perfect rectitude from his ſervant, in whom the principle of veracity is daily and hourly weakened in conformity to his own command.

Let us bring home the caſe to ourſelves, the only fair way of determining in all caſes

of confcience. Suppofe that we had eftablifhed it into a fyftem to allow ourfelves regularly to lie on one certain, given fubject, every day, and every hour in the day; while we continued to value ourfelves on the moft undeviating adherence to truth on every other point. Who fhall fay, that at the end of one year's tolerated and fyftematic lying, on this individual fubject, we fhould continue to look upon falfehood in general with the fame abhorrence we did when we firft entered upon this partial exercife of it.

There is an evil newly crept into polifhed fociety, and it comes under a mafk fo fpecious, that they who are allured by it, come not feldom under the defcription of *Good fort of people*. I allude to SUNDAY-CONCERTS. Many who would be ftartled at a profane, or even a light amufement, allow themfelves to fancy that the name of *facred mufic* fanctifies the diverfion. But if thofe more favoured beings, whom Providence enables to live in eafe and affluence,

do

do not make theſe petty renunciations of their own ways, and their own pleaſure, what criterion have we by which to judge of their ſincerity? For as the goodneſs of Providence has exempted them from painful occupations, they have neither labour from which to reſt, nor buſineſs from which to refrain. A little abſtinence from pleaſure is the only valid evidence they have to give of their obedience to the divine precept.

I know with what indignant ſcorn this remark will, by many, be received: I know that much will be advanced in favour of the ſanctity of this amuſement. I ſhall be told that the words are, many of them, extracted from the Bible, and that the compoſition is the divine Handel's. But were the angel Gabriel the poet, the archangel Michael the compoſer, and the ſong of the Lamb the ſubject, it would not abrogate that ſtatute of the Moſt High, which has ſaid, "Thou ſhalt keep holy the Sabbath "day, and thy SERVANT, and thy CATTLE,

"ſhall do no manner of work."—I am perſuaded that the hallelujahs of heaven would make no moral muſic to the ear of a conſcientious perſon, while he reflected that multitudes of ſervants are through his means waiting in the ſtreet, expoſed to every temptation; engaged, perhaps, in profane ſwearing, and idle, if not diſſolute converſation: and the very cattle are deprived of that reſt which the tender mercy of God was graciouſly pleaſed, by an aſtoniſhing condeſcenſion, to include in the commandment.

But I will, for the ſake of argument, ſo far concede as to allow of the innocence and even piety of Sunday concerts: I will ſuppoſe (what, however, does not often happen) that no unhallowed ſtrains are ever introduced; I will admit that ſome attend theſe concerts with a view to cultivate devout affections; that they cheriſh the ſerious impreſſions excited by the muſic, and retire in ſuch a frame of ſpirit as convinces them that the heart was touched while the

ear

ear was gratified: nay, I *would* grant, if ſuch a conceſſion would be accepted, that the intervals were filled up with converſation, "whereby one may edify another:"—yet all theſe good effects, allowing them really to have been produced, will not remove the invincible objection of an EVIL EXAMPLE; and what liberal ſpirit would refuſe any reaſonable ſacrifice of its own pleaſure to ſo important a motive? Your ſervants have been accuſtomed to conſider a concert as a ſecular diverſion; if you, therefore, continue it on a Sunday, will not they alſo expect to be indulged on that day with their common amuſements? Saint Paul, who was a very liberal thinker, believed it prudent to make frequent ſacrifices of things indifferent in themſelves. He was willing to deny himſelf a harmleſs and lawful gratification, *even as long as the world ſtood*, rather than ſhock the tender conſciences of men of leſs underſtanding. Where a practice is neither good nor evil in itſelf, it is both diſcreet and generous to

 avoid

avoid it, if it can be attended with any poſſible danger to minds leſs enlightened, and to faith leſs confirmed.

But religion apart, I have ſometimes wondered that people do not yield to the temptation that is held out to them, of abſtaining from diverſions one day in ſeven, upon motives of mere human policy; as voluptuaries ſometimes faſt, to give a keener reliſh to the delights of the next repaſt: for pleaſure, like an over-fed lamp, is extinguiſhed by the exceſs of its own aliment: not to ſay that the inſtrument of our gratification is often converted into our bane. Anacreon was choked by a grape ſtone. The lovers of pleaſure are not always prudent, even upon their own principles; for I am perſuaded that this world would afford much more real ſatisfaction than it does, if we did not preſs, and torture, and ſtrain it, in order to make it yield what it does not contain: Much good, and much pleaſure, it does liberally beſtow; but no labour, or art, can extract from it

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that elixir of peace, that divine eſſence of content, which it is not in its nature to produce. There is good ſenſe in ſearching into every bleſſing for its *hidden* proprieties; but it is folly to ranſack and plunder it for ſuch properties as the experience of all ages tells us are *foreign* to it. We exhauſt the world of its pleaſures, and then lament that it is empty; we wring thoſe pleaſures to the very dregs, and then complain that they are vapid. We erroneouſly ſeek in the world for that peace which we are repeatedly told is not to be found in it. While we neglect to ſeek it in *Him* who has expreſsly told us that *our* happineſs depends on *his* having "overcome the world."—"Peace "I leave with you, my peace I give unto "you; not as *the world giveth give I unto* "*you.*"

I ſhall, probably, be accuſed of a very narrow and fanatical ſpirit, in animadverting on a practice ſo little ſuſpected of harm as the frequenting of public walks and gardens on a Sunday; and, certainly,

 there

there cannot be an amuſement more entirely harmleſs in itſelf. But I muſt appeal to the honeſt teſtimony of our own hearts, if the *effect* be favourable to ſeriouſneſs. Do we commonly retire from theſe places with the impreſſions which were made on us at church in their full force? We entered theſe ſprightly ſcenes, perhaps, with a ſtrong remaining tincture of that devout ſpirit which the public worſhip had infuſed into the mind: but have we not felt it gradually diminiſh? Have not our powers of reſiſtance grown inſenſibly weaker? Has not the gaiety of the ſcene converted, as it were, argument into illuſion? The doctrines, which in the morning appeared the ſober dictates of reaſon, now ſeem unreaſonably rigid; and truths, which were then thought incontrovertible, now appear impertinent. To anſwer objections is much eaſier than to withſtand allurements. The underſtanding may controvert a ſtartling propoſition with leſs difficulty than the ſliding heart can reſiſt the infection of ſeducing gaiety. To

oppoſe

oppoſe a cold and ſpeculative faith to the enchantment of preſent pleaſure, is to fight with inadequate weapons: it is reſiſting arms with rules; it is combating a temptation with an idea. Whereas, he who engages in the Chriſtian warfare, will find that his chief ſtrength conſiſts in knowing that he is very weak; his progreſs will depend on his conviction that he is every hour liable to go back; his ſucceſs, on the perſuaſion of his fallibility; his ſafety, on the aſſurance that to retreat from danger is his higheſt glory, and to decline the combat his trueſt courage.

Whatever indiſpoſes the mind for the duty of any particular ſeaſon, though it aſſume ever ſo innocent a form, cannot be perfectly right. If the heart be laid open to the incurſion of vain imaginations, and worldly thoughts, it matters little by what gate the enemy entered. If the effect be injurious, the cauſe cannot be quite harmleſs. It is the perfidious property of certain pleaſures, that, though they ſeem not to

have

have the ſmalleſt harm in themſelves, they imperceptibly indiſpoſe the mind to every thing that is good.

Many readers will be apt to produce againſt all this preciſeneſs, that hackneyed remark which one is tired of hearing, that Sunday diverſions are allowed publicly in many foreign countries, as well in thoſe profeſſing the reformed religion, as popery. But the corruptions of one part of the Proteſtant world are no reaſonable juſtification of the evil practices of another. Error and infirmity can never be proper objects of imitation. It is ſtill a remnant of the old leaven: and as to pleading the practice of Roman Catholic countries, one bluſhes to hear an enlightened Proteſtant juſtifying himſelf by examples drawn from that benighted religion, whoſe ſanctions we ſhould in any other inſtance be aſhamed to plead.

Beſides, though I am far from vindicating the amuſements permitted on Sundays in foreign countries, by allowing that eſtabliſhed cuſtom and long preſcription have

the privilege of conferring right; yet foreigners may, at leaſt, plead the ſanction of cuſtom, and the connivance of the law: while in this country, the law of the land and eſtabliſhed uſage, concurring with ſtill higher motives, give a ſort of venerable ſanction to religious obſervances, the breach of which will be always more liable to miſconſtruction than in countries where ſo many motives do not concur in its ſupport.

I do not aſſert that all thoſe who neglect a ſtrict obſervation of the Lord's day are remiſs in the performance of all their other duties; though they ſhould bear in mind that the obſervance of their other duties is no atonement for the neglect of this; I will however venture to affirm, that all whom I have remarked conſcientiouſly to obſerve this day from right motives, have been uniformly attentive to their general conduct. It has been the opinion of many wiſe and good men,* that Chriſtianity will ſtand,

* The teſtimony of one lawyer will, perhaps, be leſs ſuſpected than that of many prieſts. "I have "ever

ſtand, or fall, as this day is neglected, or obſerved. Sunday ſeems to be a kind of Chriſtian Palladium; and the city of God will never be totally taken by the enemy till the obſervance of that be quite loſt. Every ſincere ſoldier of the great Captain of our Salvation muſt, therefore, exert himſelf in its defence, as ever he would preſerve the divine Fort of Revelation againſt the confederated attacks of the world and the Devil.

I ſhall proceed to enumerate a few of the many cauſes which ſeem to impede well-diſ-

" ever found," ſays the great Lord Chief Juſtice Hale, " by a ſtrict and diligent obſervation, that a due ob-" ſervance of the duty of Sunday has ever had joined " to it a bleſſing upon the reſt of my time; and the " week that has been ſo begun has been bleſſed and " proſperous to me: and, on the other ſide, when I " have been negligent of the duties of this day, the " reſt of the week has been unſucceſsful and unhappy " to my own ſecular employments. So that I could " eaſily make an eſtimate of my ſucceſſes the week " following, by the manner of my paſſing this day. " AND I DO NOT WRITE THIS LIGHTLY, BUT BY " LONG AND SOUND EXPERIENCE."

Sir Matthew Hale's Works.

poſed

posed people in the progress of religion. None perhaps contributes more to it than that cold, prudential caution against the folly of aiming at *perfection*, so frequent in the mouths of the worldly wise. "We "must take the world," say they, "as we "find it; reformation is not our business, "and we are commanded not to be righte-"ous overmuch." A text by the way intirely misunderstood and perverted by people of this sort. But these admonitions are contrary to every maxim in human affairs. In arts and letters* the most consummate models are held out to imitation. We never hear any body cautioned against becoming too wise, too learned, or too rich. Activity in business is accounted commendable; in friendship it is amiable; in ambition it is

* When Pliny the younger was accused of despising the degenerate eloquence of his own age, and of the vanity of aspiring at perfection in oratory, and of endeavouring to become the rival of Cicero; instead of denying the charge, he exclaimed with a noble spirit, "I think it the height of folly not always to propose "to myself the most perfect object of imitation."

laudable. The higheſt exertions of induſtry are commended; the fineſt energies of genius are admired. In all the periſhing concerns of earthly things, zeal is extolled as exhibiting marks of a ſprightly temper and a vigorous mind. Strange! that to be "fervent in ſpirit," ſhould only be diſhonourable in that ſingle inſtance which ſhould ſeem to demand unremitting diligence, and unextinguiſhable warmth.

But after all, is an exceſſive and intemperate zeal the *common* vice of the times? Is there any *very* imminent danger that the enthuſiaſm of the great ſhould tranſport them to dangerous and inconvenient exceſſes? Are our young men of faſhion ſo *very* much led away by the fervours of piety, that they require to have their imaginations tamed, and their ardours cooled by the freezing maxims of worldly wiſdom? Is the ſpirit of the age ſo *very* much inclined to catch and communicate the fire of devotion, as to require to be damped by admonition, or extinguiſhed by ridicule?

When

When the inimitable Cervantes attacked the wild notions and romantic ideas which misled the age in which he lived, he did wisely, because he combated an actually existing evil; but in this latter end of the eighteenth century, there seems to be little more occasion (among persons of rank, I mean) of cautions against enthusiasm than against chivalry; and he who declaims against religious excesses in the company of well-bred people, shews himself to be as little acquainted with the manners of the times in which he lives, as he would do who should think it a point of duty to write another Don Quixote.

Among the devices dangerous to our moral safety, certain favourite and specious maxims are not the least successful, as they carry with them an imposing air of indulgent candour, and always seem to be on the popular side of good-nature. One of the most obvious of these is, that method of reconciling the conscience to practices not decidedly wicked, and yet not scrupulously

right,

right, by the qualifying phrafe, *that there is no harm in it.* I am miftaken if more innocent perfons do not inflame their fpiritual reckoning by this treacherous apology than by almoft any other means. Few are fyftematically, or premeditatedly wicked; or propofe to themfelves, at firft, more than fuch fmall indulgences as they are perfuaded *have no harm in them.* But this latitude is gradually and imperceptibly enlarged. As the expreffion is vague and indeterminate; as the darkeft fhade of virtue, and the lighteft fhade of vice, melt into no very incongruous colouring; as the bounds between good and evil are not always fo precifely defined but that he who ventures to the confines of the one, will find himfelf on the borders of the other; every one furnifhes his own definition; every one extends the fuppofed limits a little farther; till the bounds which fence in permitted from unlawful pleafures are gradually broken down, and the marks which feparated them imperceptibly deftroyed.

It is, perhaps, one of the moſt alarming ſymptoms of the degeneracy of morals in the preſent day, that the diſtinctions of right and wrong are almoſt ſwept away in polite converſation. The moſt grave offences are often named with cool indifference; the moſt ſhameful profligacy with affected tenderneſs and indulgent toleration. The ſubſtitution of the word *gallantry* for that crime which ſtabs domeſtic happineſs and conjugal virtue, is one of the moſt dangerous of all the modern abuſes of language. Atrocious deeds ſhould never be called by gentle names. This muſt certainly contribute, more than any thing, to diminiſh the horror of vice in the riſing generation. That our paſſions ſhould be too often engaged on the ſide of error, we may look for the cauſe, though not for the vindication, in the unreſiſted propenſities of our conſtitution: but that our *reaſon* ſhould ever be exerted in its favour, that our *converſation* ſhould ever be taught to palliate it, that our *judgment*

ſhould ever look on it with indifference, that our tongues ſhould ever be employed to confound the eternal diſtinctions of right and wrong; this has no ſhadow of excuſe: becauſe this can pretend to no foundation in nature, no apology in temptation, no palliative in paſſion.

However defective, therefore, our practice may be; however we may be allured by ſeduction, or precipitated by paſſion, let us beware of lowering the STANDARD of RIGHT. This induces an imperceptible corruption into the heart, ſtagnates the nobleſt principle of action, irrecoverably debaſes the ſenſe of moral and religious obligation, and prevents us from living up to the height of our nature, becauſe it prevents us from knowing its poſſible elevation. It cuts off all communication with virtue, and almoſt prevents the poſſibility of a return to it. If we do not riſe as high as we aim, we ſhall riſe the higher for having aimed at a lofty mark: but where the RULE is low, the practice

practice cannot be high, though the converſe of the propoſition is not proportionably true.

Nothing more benumbs the exertions of ardent youthful virtue than the cruel ſneer which worldly prudence beſtows on active goodneſs, and the cool deriſion it expreſſes at the defeat of a benevolent ſcheme, of which malice, rather than penetration, had foreſeen the failure. Alas! there is little need of any ſuch diſcouragements. The world is a climate which too naturally chills a glowing generoſity, and contracts an expanded heart. The zeal of the moſt ſanguine is but too apt to cool, and the activity of the moſt diligent, to ſlacken of itſelf: and the diſappointments which Benevolence encounters in the failure of her beſt-concerted projects, and the frequent depravity of the moſt choſen objects of her bounty, would ſoon dry up the ampleſt ſtreams of charity, were they not fed by the living fountain of religious principle.

 I cannot

I cannot diſmiſs this part of my ſubject without animadverting on the too prompt alacrity, even of worthy people, to diſſeminate, in public and general converſation, inſtances of their unſucceſsful attempts to do good. I never hear a charity ſtory begun to be related in mixed company, that I do not tremble for the cataſtrophe, leſt it ſhould exhibit ſome mortifying diſappointment, which may deter the inexperienced from running any generous hazards, and excite harſh ſuſpicions, at an age, when it is leſs diſhonourable to meet with a few caſual hurts, and tranſient injuries, than to go caſed in the cumberſome and impenetrable armour of diſtruſt. The liberal ſhould be particularly cautious how they furniſh the avaricious with creditable pretences for ſaving their money, ſince all the inſtances of the mortifications the humane meet with are carefully treaſured up, and added to the armory of the covetous man's arguments, and never fail to be produced by him as defenſive

fenſive weapons, upon every freſh attack on his heart or his purſe.

But I am willing to hope that that uncharitableneſs which we ſo often meet with in perſons of advanced years, is not always the effect of a heart naturally hard. Miſanthropy is very often nothing but abuſed ſenſibility. Long habits of the world, and a melancholy conviction how little good he has been able to do in it, harden many a tender-hearted perſon. The milk of human kindneſs becomes ſoured by repeated acts of ingratitude. This commonly induces an indifference to the well-being of others, from a hopeleſſneſs of adding to the ſtock of human virtue and human happineſs. This uncomfortable diſeaſe is very fond of ſpreading its own contagion, which is a cruelty to the health of young and uninfected virtue.—For this diſtemper, generated by a too ſanguine diſpoſition, and grown chronical from repeated diſappointments, from having rated worldly virtue and worldly generoſity too highly, there is but

one remedy, or rather one prevention: and this is a genuine principle of piety. He who is once convinced that he is to aſſiſt his fellow-creatures, becauſe it is the will of God; he who is perſwaded that his forgiving his fellow-ſervant the hundred pence is a condition annexed to the remiſſion of his own ten thouſand talents, will ſoon get above all uneaſineſs when the conſequence does not anſwer his expectation. He will ſoon become only anxious to do his duty, humbly committing events to higher hands. Diſappointments will then only ſerve to refine his motives, and purify his virtue. His charity will then become a ſacrifice with which God is well pleaſed! His affections will be more ſpiritualized, and his devotions more intenſe. Nothing ſhort of ſuch a courageous piety, growing on the ſtock of Chriſtian principle, can preſerve a heart hackneyed in the world from relaxed diligence, or criminal deſpair.

People in general are not aware of the miſchief of judging of the rightneſs of any

action

action by its profperity, or of the excellence of any inftitution by the abufe of it. We muft never proportion our exertions to our fuccefs, but to our duty. If every laudable undertaking were to be dropped becaufe it failed in fome cafes, or was abufed in others, there would not be left an Alms House, a Charity-School, or an Hofpital in the land. If every right practice were to be difcontinued becaufe it had been found not to be fuccefsful in every inftance, and if every right principle were rejected becaufe it had not been operative in all cafes, this falfe reafoning pufhed to the extreme, might at laft be brought as an argument for fhutting up our churches, and burning our bibles.

But if, on the one hand, there is a proud and arrogant difcretion which ridicules, as Utopian and romantic, every generous project of the active and the liberal; fo there is on the other, a fort of popular bounty which arrogates to itfelf the exclufive name of *feeling*, and rejects with difdain the in-

fluence of an higher principle. I am far from intending to depreciate this humane and exquifitely tender fentiment, which the beneficent Author of our nature gave us, as a ftimulus to remove the diftreffes of others, in order to get rid of our own uneafinefs. I would only obferve, that where not ftrengthened by fuperior motives, it is a cafual and precarious inftrument of good, and ceafes to operate, except in the immediate prefence, and within the audible cry of mifery. This fort of feeling forgets that any calamity exifts which is out of its own fight; and though it would empty its purfe for fuch an occafional object as roufes tranfient fenfibility, yet it feldom makes any ftated provifion for miferies, which are not the lefs real becaufe they do not obtrude upon the fight, and awaken the tendernefs of immediate fympathy. This is a mechanical charity, which requires fprings and wheels to fet it a going; whereas, real Chriftian charity does not wait to be acted upon by impreffions and impulfes.

Another

Another cauſe which very much intimidates well-diſpoſed people, is their terror, leſt the character of piety ſhould derogate from their reputation as men of ſenſe. Every man of the world naturally arrogates to himſelf the ſuperiority of underſtanding over every religious man. He, therefore, who has been accuſtomed to ſet a high value on his intellectual powers, muſt have made very conſiderable advances in piety before he can acquire a magnanimous indifference to this uſurped ſuperiority of another: before he can ſubmit to the parſimonious allotment of wit and learning, which is aſſigned him by the ſupercilious hand of worldly wiſdom. But this attack upon his pride will be no bad touchſtone of his ſincerity. If his advances have not been ſo conſiderable, then, by an hypocriſy of the leaſt common kind, he will be induſtrious to appear leſs good than he really is, leſt the detection of his ſerious propenſities ſhould draw on him the imputation of ordinary parts or low attainments. But the

danger is, that while he is too ſedulouſly intent on maintaining his pretenſions as an ingenious man, his claims to piety ſhould daily become weaker. That which is long ſuppreſſed is too frequently extinguiſhed.

Nothing, perhaps, more plainly diſcovers the faint impreſſion which religion has really made upon our hearts, than this diſinclination, even of good people, to ſerious converſation. Let me not be miſunderſtood; I do not mean the wrangle of debate; I do not mean the gall of controverſy; I do not mean the fiery ſtrife of *opinions*, than which nothing can be leſs favourable to good nature, good manners, or good ſociety. But it were to be wiſhed, that it was not thought ill-bred and indiſcreet that the eſcapes of the tongue ſhould now and then betray the "abundance of the heart:" that when ſuch ſubjects are caſually introduced, a diſcouraging coldneſs did not inſtantly take place of that ſprightly animation of countenance which made common topics intereſting. If theſe "outward and viſible ſigns" were unequivocal,

equivocal, we ſhould form but moderate ideas of the "inward and ſpiritual grace." It were to be wiſhed, that ſuch ſubjects were not thought dull *merely* becauſe they are good; it were to be wiſhed that they had the common chance of fair diſcuſſion; and that parts and learning were not aſhamed to exert themſelves on occaſions where both might appear to ſo much advantage. If the heart were really intereſted, could the affections forbear now and then to break out into language? Artiſts, phyſicians, merchants, lawyers, and ſcholars, keep up the ſpirit of their profeſſions by mutual intercourſe. New lights are ſtruck out, improvements are ſuggeſted, emulation is kindled, love of the object is inflamed, miſtakes of the judgment are rectified, and deſire of excellence is excited by communication. And is piety alone ſo very eaſy of acquiſition, ſo very natural to our corrupt hearts, as to require none of the helps which are indiſpenſable on all other ſubjects? Travellers, who are to viſit any particular

particular country, are full of earneſt inquiry, and diligent reſearch; they think nothing indifferent by which their future pleaſure or advantage may be affected. Every hint which may procure them any information, or caution them againſt any danger, is thankfully received; and all this, becauſe they are really in *earneſt* in their preparation for this journey; and do fully *believe*, not only that there is ſuch a country, but that they themſelves have a perſonal individual intereſt in the good, or evil, which may be found in it.

A farther danger to *good kind of people* ſeems to ariſe from a miſtaken idea, that only great and actual ſins are to be guarded againſt. Whereas, in effect, temptations to the groſſer ſins do not ſo frequently occur to thoſe who are hedged in by the bleſſings of affluence, by a regard to reputation and the care of health; while ſins of omiſſion make up, perhaps, the moſt formidable part of *their* catalogue of offences. Theſe generally ſupply in number what they want

in weight, and are the more dangerous for being little oftenfible. They continue to be repeated with lefs regret, becaufe the remembrance of their predeceffors does not, like the remembrance of formal, actual crimes, affume a body and a fhape, and terrify by the impreffion of particular fcenes and circumftances. While the memory of tranfacted evil haunts a tender confcience by perpetual apparition; omitted duty, having no local or perfonal exiftence, not being recorded by ftanding acts and deeds, and dates, and having no diftinct image to which the mind may recur, finks into quiet oblivion, without deeply wounding the confcience, or tormenting the imagination. Thefe omiffions were, perhaps, among the "fecret fins," from which the royal penitent fo earneftly defired to be cleanfed: and it is worthy of the moft ferious confideration, that thefe are the offences againft which the Gofpel pronounces fome of its very alarming denunciations. It is not lefs againft negative than againft actual evil,

that

that affectionate exhortation, lively remonſtrance, and pointed parable, are exhauſted. It is againſt the tree which bore NO fruit, the lamp which had NO oil, the unprofitable ſervant who made NO uſe of his talent, that the ſevere ſentence is denounced; as well as againſt *corrupt* fruit, *bad* oil, and talents *ill* employed. We are led to believe, from the ſame high authority, that omitted duties, and neglected opportunities, will furniſh no inconſiderable portion of our future condemnation. A very awful part of the deciſion, in the great day of account, ſeems to be reſerved merely for careleſſneſs, omiſſions, and negatives. Ye gave me NO meat; ye gave me NO drink; ye took me NOT in; ye viſited me NOT. On the puniſhment attending poſitive crimes, as being more naturally obvious, it was not, perhaps, thought ſo neceſſary to inſiſt.

Another cauſe, which ſtill further impedes the reception of Religion even among the well-diſpoſed, is, that garment of ſadneſs in which people delight to ſuppoſe her

dreſſed;

dreſſed; and that life of hard auſterity, and pining abſtinence, which they pretend ſhe enjoins her diſciples. And it were well if this were only the miſrepreſentation of her declared enemies; but unhappily, it is the too frequent miſconception of her injudicious friends. But ſuch an over-charged picture is not more unamiable than it is unlike: for I will venture to affirm, that Religion, with all her beautiful and becoming ſanctity, impoſes fewer ſacrifices, not only of rational, but of pleaſurable enjoyment, than the uncontrolled dominion of any one vice. Her ſervice is not only ſafety hereafter, but freedom here. She is not ſo tyrannizing as appetite, ſo exacting as the World, nor ſo deſpotic as Faſhion. Let us try the caſe by a parallel, and examine it, not as affecting our virtue but our pleaſure. Does Religion forbid the cheerful enjoyments of life as rigorouſly as Avarice forbids them? Does ſhe require ſuch ſacrifices of our eaſe as Ambition, or ſuch renunciations of our quiet as Pride? Does Devotion *murder ſleep*

like Diſſipation? Does ſhe deſtroy Health like Intemperance? Does ſhe annihilate Fortune like Gaming? Does ſhe imbitter Life like Diſcord; or abridge it like Duelling? Does Religion impoſe more vigilance than Suſpicion? or inflict half as many mortifications as Vanity? Vice has her martyrs: and the moſt auſtere and ſelf-denying Aſcetic (who miſtakes the genius of Chriſtianity almoſt as much as her enemies miſtake it) never tormented himſelf with ſuch cruel and cauſeleſs ſeverity as that with which Envy lacerates her unhappy votaries. Worldly honour obliges us to be at the trouble of reſenting injuries; and worldly prudence obliges us to be at the expence of litigating about them; but Religion ſpares us the inconvenience of the one and the coſt of the other, by the ſummary command to forgive; and by this injunction ſhe conſults our happineſs no leſs than our virtue; for the torment of conſtantly hating any one muſt be, at leaſt, equal to the ſin of it. And reſentment is an evil ſo coſtly to our peace

peace that we ſhould find it more cheap to forgive even were it not more right. If this eſtimate be fairly made, then is the balance clearly on the ſide of Religion even in the article of pleaſure.

It is an infirmity not uncommon to *good kind of people*, to comfort themſelves that they are living in the exerciſe of ſome one natural good quality, and to make a religious merit of a conſtitutional happineſs. They have alſo a ſtrong propenſity to ſeparate what God has joined; belief and practice; the creed and the commandments; actions and motives; moral duty and religious obedience. Whereas, you will hardly find, in all the New Teſtament, a moral, or a ſocial virtue, that is not hedged in by ſome religious injunction: ſcarcely a good action enjoined towards others, but it is connected with ſome exhortation to perſonal purity. All the charities of benevolence are, in general, ſo agreeable to the natural make of the heart,

 that

that it is a very tender mercy of God to have made, that a duty, which, to finer ſpirits, would have been irreſiſtible as an inclination; and to have annexed the higheſt future reward to the greateſt preſent pleaſure. But in order to give a religious ſanction to a ſocial virtue, the duty of "viſiting the fatherleſs and widow in their "affliction,," is inſeparably attached to the difficult and ſelf-denying injunction of "keeping ourſelves unſpotted from the "world." This adjunct is the more needful, as many are apt to make a kind of moral commutation, and to allow themſelves ſo much pleaſure in exchange for ſo much charity. But one good quality can never ſtand proxy for another. The Chriſtian virtues derive their higheſt luſtre from aſſociation: they have ſuch a ſpirit of ſociety, that they are weak and imperfect when ſolitary; their radiance is brightened by an intermingling of their beams, and their natural ſtrength multiplied by their alliance with each other.

It

It cannot be denied that *good ſort of peo-ple* ſometimes uſe religion as the voluptuous uſe phyſick. As the latter employ medi-cine to make health agree with luxury, the former conſider religion as a medium to reconcile peace of conſcience with a life of pleaſure. But no moral chemiſtry can blend natural contradictions. In all ſuch unnatural mixtures the world will ſtill be uppermoſt, and religion will diſdain to coaleſce with its antipathy.

Let me not be ſuſpected of intending to inſinuate that religion encourages men to fly from ſociety, and hide themſelves in ſolitudes: to renounce the generous and important duties of active life, for the viſionary, cold, and fruitleſs virtues of an Hermitage, or a Cloyſter. No: the miſ-chief ariſes not from our living in the world, but from the world living in us; occupy-ing our hearts, and monopolizing our af-fections. Action is the life of virtue, and the world is the theatre of action. Perhaps ſome of the moſt perfect patterns of human

conduct may be found in the most public stations, and among the busiest orders of mankind. It is, indeed, a scene of trial, but the glory of the triumph is proportioned to the peril of the conflict. A sense of danger quickens circumspection, and makes virtue more vigilant. Lot, perhaps is not the only character who maintained his integrity in a great city, proverbially wicked, and forfeited it in the bosom of retirement.

It has been said that worldly *good sort of people* are a greater credit to their profession, by exhibiting more cheerfulness, gaiety, and happiness, than are visible in serious Christians. If this assertion be true, which I very much suspect, is it not probable that the apparent ease and gaiety of the former may be derived from the same source of consolation which Mrs. Quickly recommends to Falstaff, in Shakespeare's admirable picture of the death-bed scene of that witty profligate? "He wished for "comfort, quoth mine hostess, and began "to

"to talk of God; now I, to comfort him, "begged him he ſhould not think of God: "it was time enough to trouble himſelf "with theſe things." Do not many deceive themſelves by drawing water from theſe dry wells of comfort? and patch up a precarious and imperfect happineſs in this world, by diverting their attention from the concerns of the next?

Another obſtruction to the growth of piety, is that unhappy prejudice which even good kind of people too often entertain againſt thoſe who differ from them in opinion. Every man who is ſincerely in earneſt to advance the intereſts of religion, will have acquired ſuch a degree of candour, as to become indifferent by whom good is done, or who has the reputation of doing it, provided it be actually done. He will be anxious to increaſe the ſtock of human virtue, and of human happineſs, by every poſſible means. He will whet and ſharpen every inſtrument of goodneſs, though it be not caſt in his own mould, or faſhioned

 after

after his own pattern. He will never consider whether the form ſuits his own particular taſte, but whether the inſtrument itſelf be calculated to accompliſh the work of his maſter.

I ſhall conclude theſe looſe and immethodical hints with a plain tho' ſhort addreſs to thoſe who content themſelves with a decent profeſſion of the doctrines, and a formal attendance on the offices, inſtead of a diligent diſcharge of the duties of Chriſtianity. Believe, and forgive me!—you are the people who lower religion in the eyes of its enemies. The openly prophane, the avowed enemies to God and goodneſs, ſerve to confirm the truths they mean to oppoſe, to illuſtrate the doctrines they deny, and to accompliſh the very predictions they affect to diſbelieve. But you, like an inadequate and faithleſs prop, overturn the edifice which you pretend to ſupport.—When an acute and keen-eyed infidel meaſures your lives with the rule by which you profeſs to walk; he finds ſo little analogy

between

between them, the copy is ſo unlike the pattern, that this inconſiſtency of yours is the paſs through which his moſt dangerous attack is made. And I muſt confeſs, that, of all the arguments, which the malignant induſtry of infidelity has been able to muſter, the negligent conduct of profeſſing Chriſtians ſeems to me to be the only one which is really capable of ſtaggering a man of ſenſe.—He hears of a ſpiritual and ſelf-denying religion; he reads the beatitudes; he obſerves that the grand artillery of the Goſpel is planted againſt pride and ſenſuality. He then turns to the tranſcript of this perfect original; to the lives which pretend to be faſhioned by it. There he ſees, with triumphant deriſion, that pride, ſelf-love, luxury, ſelf-ſufficiency, unbounded perſonal expence, and an inordinate appetite for pleaſure, are reputable vices in the eyes of many of thoſe who acknowledge the truth of the Chriſtian doctrines. He weighs that meekneſs to which a bleſſing is promiſed, with that arrogance which is

too common to be very diſhonourable. He compares that non-conformity to the world, which the Bible makes the criterion of a believer, with that rage for amuſement which is not conſidered as diſreputable in a Chriſtian. He oppoſes the ſelf-denying and lowly character of the Author of our faith with the ſenſual practices of his followers. He finds little reſemblance between the reſtraints preſcribed, and the gratifications indulged in. What concluſions muſt a ſpeculative reaſoning ſceptic draw from ſuch premiſes? Is it any wonder that ſnch phraſes as "a broken ſpirit," a "contrite heart," "poverty of ſpirit, "reſtraining the ſoul," "keeping it low," and "caſting down high imaginations," ſhould be to the unbeliever "fooliſhneſs," when ſuch humiliating doctrines are a "ſtumbling block" to profeſſing Chriſtians; to Chriſtians who cannot cordially reliſh a religion which profeſſedly tells them it was ſent to ſtain the pride of human glory, and "to exclude boaſting?"

But

But though the paſſive and ſelf-denying virtues are not high in the eſteem of mere good ſort of people, yet they are peculiarly the evangelical virtues. The world extols brilliant actions; the Goſpel enjoins good habits and right motives: it ſeldom inculcates thoſe ſplendid deeds which make heroes, or teaches thoſe lofty ſentiments which conſtitute philoſophers; but it enjoins the harder taſk of renouncing ſelf, of living uncorrupted in the world, of ſubduing beſetting ſins, and of "not thinking of our-"ſelves more highly than we ought." The *acquiſition* of glory was the precept of other religions, the *contempt* of it is the perfection of Chriſtianity.

Let us then be conſiſtent, and we ſhall never be contemptible, even in the eyes of our enemies. Let not the unbeliever ſay that we have one ſet of opinions for our theory, and another for our practice; that to the vulgar

We ſhew the rough and thorny way to heav'n,
While we the primroſe path of dalliance tread.

Would

Would it not become the character of a man of ſenſe, of which conſiſtency is a moſt unequivocal proof, to chooſe ſome rule and abide by it? An extempore Chriſtian is a ridiculous character. Fixed principles, if they be really principles of the heart, and not merely opinions of the underſtanding, will be followed by a conſiſtent courſe of action; while indeciſion of ſpirit will produce inſtability of conduct. If there be a model which we profeſs to admire, let us ſquare our lives by it. If either the Koran of Mahomet, or the Revelations of Zoroaſter, be a perfect guide, let us follow one of them. If either Epicurus, Zeno, or Confucius, be the peculiar object of our veneration and reſpect, let us avowedly faſhion our conduct by the dictates of their philoſophy; and then, though we may be wrong, we ſhall not be abſurd; we may be erroneous, but we ſhall not be inconſiſtent; but if the Bible be in truth the word of God, as we profeſs to believe, we need look no farther for a conſummate pattern.

"If

"If the Lord be God, let us follow HIM." If Chriſt be a ſacrifice for ſin, let Him be alſo to us the example of an holy life.

But I am willing to flatter myſelf that the moral and intellectual ſcene about us begins to brighten. I indulge myſelf in moments of the moſt enthuſiaſtic and delightful viſion, that things are beginning gradually to lead to the fulfilment of that promiſe, that "all the kingdoms of the "earth ſhall become the kingdoms of our "God and of his Chriſt." I take encouragement that that glorious prophecy, that "of the increaſe of his government "there ſhall be no end," ſeems to be gradually accompliſhing; and in no inſtance more, perhaps, than in the noble attempt about to be made for the abolition of the African Slave-trade *. For what event can human wiſdom foreſee more likely to contribute to "give the SON the Heathen "for his inheritance, and the uttermoſt

* This intereſting queſtion was then beginning to be agitated in parliament.

"parts

"parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion," than the ſucceſs of ſuch an enterpriſe, which will reſtore the luſtre of the Britiſh name, and cut off at a ſingle ſtroke as large and diſgraceful a portion of national guilt as ever impaired the virtue, or diſhonoured the councils of a Chriſtian country.

A good ſpirit ſeems to be at work. A catholic temper is diffuſing itſelf among all ſects and parties: an enlightened candour, and a liberal toleration, were never more prevalent; good men combat each other's opinions with leſs rancour, and better manners*; they hate each other leſs for thoſe points in which they diſagree, and love each other more for thoſe points in which they join iſſue than they formerly did. We have many public encouragements; we have a pious king; a wiſe and virtuous miniſter; very many reſpectable, and not a few ſerious clergy. Their number I am willing to hope is daily increaſing. Among theſe

* This was written before the French Revolution!!!

ſome

ſome of the firſt in dignity are the moſt exemplary in conduct. An increaſing deſire to inſtruct the poor, to inform the ignorant, and to reclaim the vicious, is ſpreading among us. The late Royal Proclamation affords an honourable ſanction to virtuous endeavours, and lends nerves and ſinews to the otherwiſe feeble exertions of individuals, by enforcing laws wiſely planned, but hitherto feebly executed. In ſhort, there is a good hope that we ſhall more and more become "that happy people who have the Lord for their God:" that as proſperity is already within our walls, peace and virtue may abide in our dwellings.

But vain will be all endeavours after *partial* and *ſubordinate* amendment. Reformation muſt begin with the GREAT, or it will never be effectual. *Their* example is the fountain whence the vulgar draw their habits, actions, and characters. To expect to reform the poor while the opulent are corrupt, is to throw odours into the ſtream while the ſprings are poiſoned.

If,

If, therefore, the Rich and Great will not, from a liberal ſpirit of doing right, and from a Chriſtian ſpirit of fearing God, abſtain from thoſe offences, for which the poor are to ſuffer fines and impriſonments, effectual good cannot be done. It will ſignify little to lay penalties on the horſes of the drover, or on the waggon of the huſbandman, while the chariot wheels of the Great roll with inceſſant motion; and while the ſacred day on which the ſons of induſtry are commanded by royal proclamation to deſiſt from travelling, is for that very reaſon ſelected for the journeys of the Great, and preferred, becauſe the road is encumbered with fewer interruptions. But will it not ſtrike every well-meaning Sunday traveller with a generous remorſe, when he reflects that he owes the accommodation of an unobſtructed road to the very obedience which is paid by others to that divine and human law which he is in the very act of violating?

Will

Will not the common people think it a little inequitable that they are abridged of the diverſions of the public-houſe and the gaming-yard on Sunday evening, when they ſhall hear that many houſes of the firſt nobility are on that evening crowded with company, and ſuch amuſements carried on as are prohibited by human laws even on common days? As imitation, and a deſire of being in the faſhion, govern the lower orders of mankind, it is to be feared that they will not think reformation reputable, while they ſee it *recommended* only, and not *practiſed*, by their ſuperiors. A precept counteracted by an example, is worſe than fruitleſs, it is ridiculous: and the common people will be tempted to ſet an inferior value on goodneſs, when they find it is only expected from the lower ranks. They cannot ſurely but ſmile at the diſintereſtedneſs of their ſuperiors, who, while they ſeem anxiouſly concerned to ſave others, are ſo little ſolicitous about their own ſtate. The

ambitious

ambitious vulgar will hardly relifh a falvation which is only intended for plebeians; nor will they be apt to entertain very exalted notions of that promifed future reward, the road to which they perceive their betters are fo much more earneft to point out to *them*, than to walk in themfelves.

It was not by inflicting pains and penalties that Chriftianity firft made its way into the world: the divine truths it inculcated received irrefiftible confirmation from the Lives, Practices, and Examples of its venerable profeffors. Thefe were arguments which no popular prejudice could refift, no Jewifh logic refute, and no Pagan perfecution difcredit. Had the primitive Chriftians only *praifed and promulgated* the moft perfect religion the world ever faw, it would have produced but very flender effects on the faith and manners of the people. The aftonifhing confequences which followed the pure doctrines of the Gofpel, would never have been produced if

if the jealous and inquisitive eye of malice could have detected that the DOCTRINES the Christians recommended had not been illustrated by the LIVES they led.

POSTSCRIPT

TO THE

SECOND EDITION.

THE public favour having already brought this little Eſſay to another Edition, the Author has been ſedulous to diſcover any particular objections that have been made to it. Since the preceding ſheets were printed off, it has been ſuggeſted by ſome very reſpectable perſons who have honoured this ſlight performance with their notice, that it inculcates a too rigid auſterity, and carries the point of obſerving Sunday much too far; that it takes away all the uſual occupations of the day, without ſubſtituting any others in their ſtead; and that it only pulls down a wrong ſyſtem, without ſo much as attempting to build up a right one. To theſe obſervations the Author begs leave to reply, that whilſt animad-

animadverting on error, the inſiſting on obvious duty was purpoſely omitted. To tell people what they already know to be right, was leſs the intention of this addreſs, than to obſerve upon practices which long habit had prevented them from perceiving to be wrong. Senſible and well-meaning perſons can hardly be at a loſs on a ſubject which has exhauſted precept and wearied exhortation. To have expatiated on it, would only have been to repeat what is already known and acknowledged to be right, even by thoſe whom the hurry of engagements will not allow to take breath one day in a week, that they may run the race of pleaſure with more alacrity on the other ſix. But probably it is not the duties, but the amuſements appropriated to the day about which the enquiry is made. It will, perhaps, be found, that the intervals of a Sunday regularly devoted to all its reaſonable and obvious employments, are not likely to be ſo very tedious, but that they might be eaſily and pleaſantly filled up by

 cheerful,

cheerful, innocent, and inſtructive conversation. Human delights would be very circumſcribed indeed, if the practices here noticed as erroneous, included the whole circle of enjoyment. In addition to the appropriate pleaſures of devotion, are the pleaſures of retirement, the pleaſures of friendſhip, the pleaſures of intellect, and the pleaſures of beneficence, to be eſtimated as nothing?

There will not be found, perhaps, a ſingle perſon who ſhall honour theſe pages with a peruſal, who has not been repeatedly told, with an air of impoſing gravity, by thoſe who produce cards on a Sunday evening, *that it is better to play than to talk ſcandal*. Before this pithy axiom was invented, it was not perhaps ſuſpected that Sunday gaming would ever be adduced as an argument in favour of morals. Without entering into the comparative excellence of theſe two occupations, or preſuming to determine which has a claim to pre-eminence of piety, may we not venture to be thankful

that

that theſe alternatives do not ſeem to empty the whole ſtock of human reſource; but that ſomething will ſtill be left to occupy and to intereſt thoſe who adopt neither the one nor the other?

People in the gay and elegant ſcenes of life are perpetually complaining that an extenſive acquaintance, and the neceſſity of being conſtantly engaged in large circles and mixed aſſemblies, leaves them little leiſure for family enjoyment, ſelect converſation, and domeſtic delights. Others, with no leſs earneſtneſs, lament that the hurry of public ſtations, and the neceſſary demands of active life, allow them no time for any but frivolous reading. Now the recurrence of one Sunday in every week ſeems to hold out an inviting remedy for both theſe evils. The ſweet and delightful pleaſures of family ſociety might then be uninterruptedly enjoyed, by the habitual excluſion of trifling and idle viſitors, who do not come to ſee their friends, but to get rid of themſelves. Perſons of faſhion,

 living

living in the ſame houſe, and connected by the cloſeſt ties, whom buſineſs and pleaſure keep aſunder during the greateſt part of the week, would then have an opportunity of ſpending a little time together, and of cultivating that friendſhip for each other, that affection for their children, and that intercourſe with their Maker, to which the preſent manners are not *very* favourable. To the other ſet of complainers, thoſe who can find no time to read, this interval naturally preſents itſelf; and it ſo happens, that ſome of the moſt enlightened men the world ever ſaw have, not unfrequently, devoted their rare talents to ſubjects peculiarly ſuited to this day; and that not merely in the didactic form of ſermons, which men of the world affect to diſdain; but in every alluring ſhape which human ingenuity could aſſume. It can be fortunately produced among a thouſand other inſtances, that the deepeſt metaphyſician *, the greateſt aſtro-

* Locke, Newton, Milton, Butler, Addiſon, Bacon, Boyle.

nomer,

nomer, the fublimeft poet, the acuteft reafoner, the politeft writer, the moft confummate philofopher, and the profoundeft inveftigator of nature, which this, or perhaps any country has produced, have all written on fuch fubjects as are analogous to the bufinefs of the Lord's day. Such authors as thefe, even wits, philofophers, and men of the world, muft acknowledge that it is not bigotry to read, nor enthufiafm to commend. Of this illuftrious groupe only *one* was a clergyman, which to a certain clafs of readers will be a ftrong recommendation: though it is a little hard that the faftidioufnefs of modern tafte fhould undervalue the learned and pious labours of divines, only becaufe they are *profeffional.* In every other function, a man's compofitions are not the lefs efteemed becaufe they peculiarly belong to his more immediate bufinefs. Blackftone's opinions in jurifprudence are in high reputation, though he was a lawyer: Sydenham is ftill confulted as oracular in fevers,

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in ſpite of his having been a phyſician; and the Commentaries of Cæſar are of eſtabliſhed authority in military operations, notwithſtanding he was a ſoldier.

AN

ESTIMATE

OF THE

RELIGION

OF THE

FASHIONABLE WORLD.

There was never found in any age of the world, either Philosophy, or Sect, or Religion, or Law, or Discipline, which did so highly exalt the public good as the Christian Faith.

LORD BACON.

A N

ESTIMATE,

&c. &c. &c.

INTRODUCTION.

THE general defign of thefe pages is to offer fome curfory remarks, on the prefent ftate of religion among a great part of the polite and the fafhionable; not only among that defcription of perfons who, whether from difbelief or whatever other caufe, avowedly neglect the duties of Chriftianity; but among that more decent clafs alfo, who, while they acknowledge their belief of its truth by a public profeffion, and are not inattentive to any of its forms, yet exhibit little of its fpirit in their general temper and conduct: It is defigned to fhew

that Chriſtianity, like its divine Author, is not only *denied* by thoſe who in ſo many words diſown their ſubmiſſion to its authority, but is *betrayed* by the ſtill more treacherous diſciple, even while he cries, *Hail, Maſter!*

For this viſible declenſion of piety various reaſons have been aſſigned, ſome of which however do not ſeem fully adequate to the effects aſcribed to them. The author of a late popular pamphlet * has accounted for the increaſed profligacy of the *common people*, by aſcribing it, very juſtly, to the increaſed diſſoluteneſs of their ſuperiors. And who will deny what he farther affirms—that the general conduct of high and low receives a deep tincture of depravity from the growing neglect of public worſhip? So far I moſt cordially agree with the noble author. Nothing can be more obvious, than that the diſuſe of public wor-

* Hints to an Aſſociation for preventing Vice and Immorality, written by a Nobleman of the higheſt rank.

ſhip

ſhip is naturally followed by a neglect of all religious duties. Energies, which are not called out into action, almoſt neceſſarily die in the mind. The ſoul, no leſs than the body, requires its ſtated repairs, and regular renovations. And from the ſluggiſh and procraſtinating ſpirit of man, that religious duty to which no fixed time is aſſigned, is ſeldom, it is to be feared, performed at all *.

I muſt, however, take leave to diſſent from the opinion of the noble author, that the too common deſertion of perſons of rank from the ſervice of the eſtabliſhment is occaſioned in general, as he intimates, by their diſapprobation of the Liturgy; as it may more probably be ſuppoſed, that the far greater part of them are deterred from going to church by motives widely removed from ſpeculative objections and conſcientious ſcruples.

* On this Subject ſee Dr. Johnſon's Life of Milton.

It would be quite foreign to my present purpose to enter upon the question of the superior utility of a form of prayer for public worship. Most sincerely attached to the establishment myself, not, as far as I am able to judge, from prejudice, but from a fixed and settled conviction; I regard its institutions with a veneration at once affectionate and rational. Never need a Christian, except when his own heart is strangely indisposed, fail to derive benefit from its ordinances, and he may bless the overruling providence of God, that, in this instance, the natural variableness and inconstancy of human opinion is, as it were, fixed, and settled, and hedged in, by a stated service so pure, so evangelical, and which is enriched by such a large infusion of sacred Scripture.

If so many among us contemn the service as having been, individually, to *us* fruitless and unprofitable, let us inquire whether the blessing may not be withheld because

we

we are not fervent in aſking it.—If we do not find a ſuitable humiliation in the *Confeſſion*, a becoming earneſtneſs in the *Petitions*, a congenial joy in the *Adoration*, a correſponding gratitude in the *Thankſgivings*, it is becauſe our hearts do not accompany our words; it is becauſe we reſt in "the form of godlineſs," and are contented to remain deſtitute of its "power." If we are not duly intereſted when the ſelect portions of Scripture are read to us, it is becauſe we do not as "new born babes "deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that "we may grow thereby."

Perhaps there has not been ſince the age of the Apoſtles, a church upon earth in which the public worſhip was ſo ſolemn and ſo cheerful; ſo ſimple yet ſo ſublime; ſo full of fervour, at the ſame time ſo free from enthuſiaſm; ſo rich in the gold of Chriſtian antiquity, yet ſo aſtoniſhingly exempt from its droſs. That it has imperfections we do not deny, but what are they compared with its general excellence? They

are

are as the ſpots on the ſun's diſk, which a ſharp obſerver may detect, but which neither diminiſh the warmth, nor obſcure the brightneſs.

But if thoſe imperfections which are inſeparable from all human inſtitutions, are to be alleged as reaſons for abſtaining to attend on the ſervice of the eſtabliſhed church; we muſt, on the ſame principle, and on ſtill ſtronger grounds, abſtain from all public worſhip whatever; and indeed it muſt be confeſſed, that the perſons of whom we are now ſpeaking are very conſiſtent in this matter.

But the difference of opinion here intimated, is not ſo much about the Liturgy itſelf, as the imaginary effects attributed to it in thinning the pews of our people of faſhion. The ſlighteſt degree of obſervation ſerves to contradict this aſſertion. Thoſe however, who, with the noble author, maintain the other opinion, may ſatisfy their doubts by inquiring, whether the regular and ſyſtematic abſentees from church

are

are chiefly to be found among the thinking, the reading, the ſpeculative, and the ſcrupulous part of mankind.

Even the moſt negligent attendant on public worſhip muſt know, that the obnoxious creed, to whoſe malignant potency this general deſertion is aſcribed by the noble author, is never read above three or four Sundays in the year; and even allowing the validity of the objections brought againſt it, that does not ſeem a very adequate reaſon for baniſhing the moſt ſcrupulous and tender conſciences from church on the remaining eight-and-forty Sundays of the calendar.

Beſides, there is one teſt which is abſolutely unequivocal: this creed is never read at all in the afternoon, any more than the Litany, that other great ſource of offence and ſuppoſed deſertion; and yet with all theſe multiplied reaſons for their attendance, do we ſee the conſcientious crowds of the high born, who abſtain from the morning ſervice through their repugnance to ſub-

 ſcribe

ſcribe to the dogmas of Athanaſius, or the more orthodox clauſes of the morning Litany, do we ſee them, I ſay, flocking to the evening ſervice, impatient for the exerciſe of that devotion which had been obſtructed by theſe two objectionable portions of the Liturgy? Do we ſee them eager to explain the cauſe of their morning abſence, and zealous to vindicate their piety by aſſiduouſly attending when the reprobated portions are omitted? So far from it, is it not pretty evident that the general quarrel (with ſome few exceptions) of thoſe who habitually abſent themſelves from public worſhip, is not with the Creed, but the Commandments? With ſuch, to reform the Prayer-Book would go but a little way, unleſs the New Teſtament could be alſo abridged. Cut, and pare, and prune the ſervice of the Church ever ſo much, ſtill Chriſtianity itſelf will be found full of formidable objections. Should the Church even give up her abſtruſe creeds, it would avail but little, unleſs the Bible would alſo expunge thoſe

rigorous

rigorous laws which not only prohibit sinful actions, but corrupt inclinations. And to speak honestly, I do not see how such persons as habitually infringe the laws of virtue and sobriety, and who yet are men of acute sagacity, accustomed on other subjects to a consistent train of reasoning; who see consequences in their causes; who behold practical self-denial necessarily involved in the sincere habit of religious observances —I do not see how, with respect to such men, any doctrines reformed, any redundancies lopped, any obscurities brightened, could effect the object of this author's very benevolent and christian wish.

Religious duties are often neglected upon more consistent grounds than the friends of religion are willing to allow. They are often discontinued, not as repugnant to the understanding, not as repulsive to the judgment, but as hostile to a licentious life. And when a prudent man, after having entered into a solemn convention, finds that

he is living in a conſtant breach of every article of the treaty he has engaged to obſerve, one cannot much wonder at his getting out of the hearing of the heavy artillery which he knows is planted againſt him, and againſt every one who lives in the allowed infraction of the covenant into which every Chriſtian has entered.

For a man of ſenſe who ſhould acknowledge the truth of the doctrine, would find himſelf obliged to ſubmit to the force of the precept. It is not eaſy to be a comfortable ſinner, without trying, at leaſt, to be a confirmed unbeliever. And as that cannot be atchieved by a wiſh, the next expedient is to ſhun the recollection of that belief, and to forget that of which we cannot be ignorant. The ſmalleſt remains of faith would embitter a life of libertiniſm, and to be frequently reminded of the articles of that faith would diſturb the eaſe induced by a neglect of all obſervances. While to him who retains any impreſſion of

of Chriſtianity, the wildeſt feſtivals of intemperance will be converted into the terrifying feaſt of Damocles.

That many a reſpectable non-conformiſt is kept out of the pale of the eſtabliſhment by ſome of the cauſes noticed by the noble author, cannot be queſtioned, and a matter of regret it is. But theſe, however, are often ſober thinkers, ſerious inquirers, conſcientious reaſoners, whoſe object we may charitably believe is truth, however they may be deceived as to its nature: but that the ſame objections baniſh the great and the gay is not equally evident. Thanks to the indolence and indifference of the times, it is not dogmas or doctrines, it is not abſtract reaſonings, or puzzling propoſitions, it is not perplexed argument, or intricate metaphyſics, which can now diſincline from Chriſtianity; ſo far from it, they cannot even allure to unbelief. Infidelity itſelf, with all that ſtrong and natural bias which ſelfiſhneſs and appetite entertain in its favour, if it appear in the grave and ſcholaſtic

 form

form of ſpeculation, argument, or philoſophical deduction, may lie almoſt as quietly on the ſhelf as the volumes of its moſt able antagoniſt; and the cobwebs are almoſt as ſeldom bruſhed from Hobbes as from Hooker. No: prudent ſcepticiſm has wiſely ſtudied the temper of the times, and ſkilfully felt the pulſe of this relaxed, and indolent, and ſelfiſh age. It prudently accommodated itſelf to the reigning character, when it adopted ſarcaſm inſtead of reaſoning, and preferred a ſneer to an argument. It diſcreetly judged, that, if it would now gain proſelytes, it muſt ſhew itſelf under the bewitching form of a profane bon-mot; muſt be interwoven in the texture of ſome amuſing hiſtory, written with the levity of a romance, and the point and glitter of an epigram: it muſt embelliſh the ample margin with ſome offenſive anecdote or impure alluſion, and decorate impiety with every looſe and meretricious ornament which a corrupt imagination can invent. It muſt break up the old flimſy ſyſtem into little

miſchievous

miſchievous aphoriſms, ready for practical purpoſes: it muſt divide the rope of ſand into little portable parcels, which the ſhallowest wit can comprehend, and the ſhorteſt memory carry away.

Philoſophy therefore (as Unbelief, by a patent of its own creation, has lately been pleaſed to call itſelf) will not do nearly ſo much miſchief to the preſent age as its primitive apoſtles intended: ſince it requires time, application, and patience to peruſe the reaſoning veterans of the ſceptic ſchool: and theſe are talents not now very ſeverely devoted to ſtudy of any ſort, by thoſe who give the law to faſhion; eſpecially ſince, as it was hinted above, the ſame principles may be acquired on cheaper terms, and the reputation of being philoſophers obtained without the ſacrifices of pleaſure for the ſeverities of ſtudy; ſince the induſtry of our literary chemiſts has extracted the ſpirit from the groſs ſubſtance of the old unvendible poiſon, and exhibited it in the volatile eſſence of a few ſprightly ſayings.

If therefore, in this voluptuous age, when a frivolous and relaxing diſſipation has infected our very ſtudies, infidelity will not be at the pains of deep reſearch and elaborate inveſtigation, even on ſuch ſubjects as are congenial to its affections, and promotive of its object; it is vain to expect that Chriſtianity will be more engaging, either as an object of ſpeculation, or as a rule of practice; ſince it demands a ſtill ſtronger exertion of thoſe energies which the gay world is not at the pains to exerciſe, even on the ſide they approve. For the evidences of Chriſtianity require attention to be comprehended, no leſs than its doctrines require humility to be received, and its precepts ſelf-denial to be obeyed.

Will it then be uncharitable to pronounce, that the leading miſchief not which thins our churches, (for that is not the evil I propoſe to conſider,) but which pervades our whole character, and gives the colour to our general conduct, is *practical irreligion?* an irreligion not ſo much oppoſed to a ſpecula-

tive

tive faith, not ſo much in hoſtility to the evidences of chriſtianity, as to that ſpirit, temper, and behaviour which chriſtianity inculcates.

On this practical irreligion it is propoſed to offer a few hints. After attempting to ſhew, by a compariſon with the religion of the great in preceding ages, that there is a viſible decline of piety among the higher ranks—that even thoſe more liberal ſpirits who neglect not many of the great duties of benevolence, yet hold the ſeverer obligations of piety in no eſteem—I ſhall proceed, though perhaps with too little method, to remark on the notorious *effects* of the decay of this religious principle, as it corrupts our mode of education, infects domeſtic conduct, ſpreads the contagion downwards among ſervants and inferiors, and influences our general manners, habits, and converſation.

But what it is here propoſed principally to inſiſt on is, that this defect of religious principle is almoſt equally fatal, as to all the

the ends and purpofes of genuine piety, whether it appear in the open contempt and defiance of all facred inftitutions, or under the more decent veil of external obfervances, unfupported by fuch a conduct as is analogous to the chriftian profeffion.

I fhall proceed with a few remarks on a third clafs of fafhionable characters, who profefs to acknowledge chriftianity as a perfect fyftem of morals, while they deny its divine authority: and conclude with fome flight animadverfions on the opinion which thefe modifh chriftians maintain, that morality is the whole of religion.

It muft be confeffed, however, that manners and principles act reciprocally on each other; and are, by turns, caufe, and effect. For inftance—the increafed relaxation of morals produces the encreafed neglect of infufing religious principles in the education of youth: which effect becomes, in its turn, a caufe; and in due time, when that caufe comes to operate, helps on the decline of manners.

CHAP. I.

Decline of Chriſtianity ſhewn, by a Comparative View of the Religion of the Great in preceding Ages.

IF the general poſition of this little tract be allowed, namely, that religion is at preſent in no very flouriſhing ſtate among thoſe whoſe example, from the high ground on which they ſtand, guides and governs the reſt of mankind, it will not be denied by thoſe who are ever ſo ſuperficially acquainted with the hiſtory of our country, that this has not always been the caſe. Thoſe who make a fair compariſon muſt allow, that however the preſent age may be improved in other important and valuable advantages, yet that there is but little appearance remaining among the great and the powerful of that "righteouſneſs which exalteth a nation;"—They muſt confeſs that there has been a *moral revolution* in the national manners and

 principles,

principles, very little analogous to that great *political* one which we hear ſo much and ſo juſtly extolled. That our public virtue bears little proportion to our public bleſſings; and that our religion has decreaſed in a pretty exact proportion to our having ſecured the means of enjoying it.

That the antipodes to wrong are hardly ever right, was very ſtrikingly illuſtrated about the middle of the laſt century, when the fiery and indiſcreet zeal of one party was made a pretext for the profligate impiety of the other; who, to the bad principle which dictated a depraved conduct, added the bad taſte of being proud of it:— when even the leaſt abandoned were abſurdly apprehenſive that an appearance of decency might ſubject them to the charge of fanaticiſm, a charge in which they took care to involve real piety as well as enthuſiaſtic pretence, till it became the general faſhion to avoid no ſin but hypocriſy, to dread no imputation but that of ſeriouſneſs, and to be more afraid of the virtues which

procure a good reputation than of every vice which ever earned a bad one. Party was no longer confined to political distinctions, but became a part of morals, and was carried into religion. The more profligate of the court party began to connect the idea of devotion with that of republicanism; and to prove their aversion to the one, thought they could never cast too much ridicule upon the other. The public taste became debauched, and to be licentious in principle, was thought by many to be the best way of making their court to the restored Monarch, and of proving their abhorrence of the hypocritical side. And *Poems by a person of honour*, the phrase of the day to designate a fashionable author, were often scandalous offences against modesty and virtue.

It was not till piety was thus unfortunately brought into disrepute, that persons of condition thought it made their sincerity, their abilities, or their good breeding questionable, to appear openly on the side

of religion. A ſtrict attachment to piety did not ſubtract from a great reputation. Men were not thought the worſe lawyers, generals, miniſters, legiſlators, or hiſtorians, for believing, and even defending, the religion of their country. The gallant Sir Philip Sidney, the raſh but heroic Eſſex, the politic and ſagacious Burleigh, the all-accompliſhed Falkland *, not only publicly owned their belief in chriſtianity, but even wrote ſome things of a religious nature †. Theſe inſtances, and many others which might be adduced, are not, it will be allowed, ſelected from among contemplative recluſes, grave divines, or authors by profeſſion; but from the buſy, the active, and the illuſtrious; from public characters, from men of ſtrong paſſions, beſet with great temptations; diſtinguiſhed

* Lord Falkland aſſiſted the great Chillingworth in his incomparable work, The Religion of a Proteſtant.

† See that equally elegant and authentic work, *The Anecdotes of Royal and Noble Authors.*

actors

actors on the ſtage of life; and whoſe reſpective claims to the title of fine gentlemen, brave ſoldiers, or able ſtateſmen, have never been called in queſtion.

What would the Hales, and the Clarendons, and the Somerſes* have ſaid, had they been told that the time was at no great diſtance when that ſacred book, for which they thought it no derogation from their wiſdom or their dignity to entertain the profoundeſt reverence; the book which they made the rule of their faith, the object of their moſt ſerious ſtudy, and the foundation of their eternal hope; that this book would one day be of little more uſe to men in high public ſtations, than to be the inſtrument of an oath; and that the ſublimeſt rites of the chriſtian religion would ſoon be conſidered as little more

* This conſummate ſtateſman was not only remarkable for a ſtrict attendance on the public duties of religion, but for maintaining them with equal exactneſs in his family, at a period too when religion was moſt diſcountenanced.

than

than a neceſſary qualification for a place, or the legal preliminary to an office.

This indeed is the boaſted period of free enquiry and liberty of thinking: but it is the peculiar character of the preſent age, that its miſchiefs often aſſume the moſt alluring forms; and that the moſt alarming evils not only look ſo like goodneſs as to be often miſtaken for it, but are ſometimes mixed up with ſo much real good, as often to diſguiſe, though never to counteract, their malignity. Under the beautiful maſk of an enlightened philoſophy, all religious reſtraints are ſet at nought; and ſome of the deadlieſt wounds have been aimed at chriſtianity, in works written in avowed vindication of the moſt amiable of all the chriſtian principles *. Even the prevalence of

* See particularly *Voltaire ſur la Tolerance.* This is a common artifice of that inſidious author. In this inſtance he has made uſe of the popularity he obtained in the fanatical tragedy at Thoulouſe (the murder of Calas) to diſcredit, though in the moſt guarded manner, chriſtianity itſelf; degrading martyrdoms,

of a liberal and warm philanthropy is secretly ſapping the foundation of chriſtian morals, becauſe many of its champions allow themſelves to live in the open violation of the ſeverer duties of juſtice and ſobriety, while they are contending for the gentler ones of charity and beneficence.

The ſtrong and generous bias in favour of univerſal toleration, noble as the principle itſelf is, has engendered a dangerous notion that all error is innocent. Whether it be owing to this, or to whatever other cauſe, it is certain that the diſcriminating features of the chriſtian religion are every day growing into leſs repute; and it is become the faſhion, even among the better ſort, to evade, to lower, or to generalize, its moſt diſtinguiſhing peculiarities.

tyrdoms, denying the truth of the Pagan perſecutions, &c. &c. And by mixing ſome truths with many falſehoods, by aſſuming an amiable candour, and profeſſing to ſerve the intereſts of goodneſs, he treacherouſly contrives to leave on the mind of the unguarded reader impreſſions the moſt unfavourable to chriſtianity.

 There

There is ſo little of the Author of chriſtianity left in his own religion, that an apprehenſive believer is ready to exclaim, with the woman at the ſepulchre, "They "have taken away my Lord, and I know "not where they have laid him." The locality of Hell and the exiſtence of an Evil Spirit are annihilated, or conſidered as abſtract ideas. When they are alluded to, it is periphraſtically; or they are diſcontinued not on the ground of their being awful and terrible, but they are ſet aſide as topics too vulgar for the poliſhed, too illiberal for the learned, and as favouring too much of credulity for the enlightened.

While we glory in having freed ourſelves from the trammels of human authority, are we not turning our liberty into licentiouſneſs, and wantonly ſtruggling to throw off the *divine* authority too? Freedom of thought is the glory of the human mind, while it is confined within its juſt and ſober limits; but though we may think ourſelves accountable for *opinions* at no

earthly tribunal, yet it ſhould be remembered that thoughts as well as actions are amenable at the bar of God: and though we may rejoice that the tyranny of the ſpiritual Procruſtes is ſo far annihilated, that we are in no danger of having our opinions lopped or lengthened till they are brought to fit the meaſure of human caprice, yet there is ſtill a ſtandard by which not only actions are weighed, but opinions are judged; and every ſentiment which is clearly inconſiſtent with the revealed will of God, is as much throwing off *his* dominion as the breach of any of his moral precepts. This cuts up by the roots that popular and independant phraſe, that "thoughts are free," for in this view we are no more at liberty to indulge opinions in oppoſition to the expreſs word of God than we are at liberty to infringe practically on his commandments.

There is then ſurely one teſt by which it is no mark of intolerance to try the principles of men, namely, the *Law and the*

Teſtimony: and on applying to this touch-ſtone, it is impoſſible not to lament, that, while a more generous ſpirit governs our judgment, a purer principle does not ſeem to regulate our lives. May it not be ſaid, that, while we are juſtly commended for thinking charitably of the opinions of others, we ſeem, in return, as if we were deſirous of furniſhing them with an opportunity of exerciſing their candour by the laxity of principle in which we indulge ourſelves? If the hearts of men were as firmly united to each other by the bond of charity as ſome pretend, they could not fail of being united to God alſo by one common principle of piety. And chriſtian piety furniſhes the only certain ſource of all charitable judgment, as well as of all virtuous conduct.

Inſtead of abiding by the ſalutary precept of *judging no man*, it is the faſhion to exceed our commiſſion, and to fancy every body to be in a ſafe ſtate. "Judge not" is the preciſe limit of our rule. There is no

no more encouragement to judge falſely on the ſide of worldly candour, than there is to judge harſhly on the ſide of Chriſtian charity. In forming our notions we have to chuſe between the bible and the world, between the rule and the practice. Where theſe do not agree, it is left to the judgment of believers, at leaſt, by which we are to decide. But we never act, in religious concerns, by the ſame rule of common ſenſe and equitable judgment which governs us on other occaſions. In weighing any commodity, its weight is determined by ſome generally allowed ſtandard; and if the commodity be heavier or lighter than the ſtandard weight, we add to or take from it: but we never break, or clip, or reduce the weight to ſuit the thing we are weighing; becauſe the common conſent of mankind has agreed that the one ſhall be conſidered as the ſtandard to aſcertain the value of the other. But, in weighing our principles by the ſtandard of the Goſpel, we do juſt the reverſe. Inſtead of bring-

ing our opinions and actions to the *balance of the sanctuary*, to determine and rectify their comparative deficiencies, we lower and reduce the standard of the scripture-doctrines till we have accommodated them to our own purposes: so that, instead of trying others and ourselves by God's unerring rule, we try the truth of God's rule by its conformity or non-conformity to our own depraved notions and corrupt practices.

CHAP. II.

Benevolence allowed to be the reigning Virtue, but not exclusively *the Virtue of the present Age.—Benevolence not the Whole of Religion, though one of its most characteristic Features. Whether Benevolence proceeds from a religious Principle, will be more infallibly known by the general Disposition of Time, Fortune, and the common Habits of Life, than from a few occasional Acts of Bounty.*

To all the remonstrance and invective of the preceding chapter, there will not fail to be opposed that which we hear every day so loudly insisted on,—the decided superiority of the present age in other and better respects. It will be said, that even those who neglect the outward forms of religion, exhibit however the best proofs of the best principles; that the unparalleled instances of charity of which we are continual witnesses; that the many striking acts of

 public

public bounty, and the various new and noble improvements in this ſhining virtue, juſtly entitle the preſent age to be called, by way of eminence, *the age of benevolence.*

It is with the livelieſt joy I acknowledge the delightful truth. Liberality flows with a full tide through a thouſand channels. There is ſcarcely a newſpaper but records ſome meeting of men of fortune for the moſt ſalutary purpoſes. The noble and numberleſs ſtructures for the relief of diſtreſs, which are the ornament and the glory of our metropolis, proclaim a ſpecies of munificence unknown to former ages. Subſcriptions, not only to hoſpitals, but to various other valuable inſtitutions, are obtained almoſt as ſoon as ſolicited. And who but muſt wiſh that theſe beautiful monuments of benevolence may become every day more numerous, and more extended!

Yet, with all theſe allowed and obvious excellencies, it is not quite clear whether ſomething too much has not been ſaid of the liberality of the preſent age, in a comparative

parative view with that of thoſe ages which preceded it. A general alteration of habits and manners has at the ſame time multiplied public bounties and private diſtreſs; and it is ſcarcely a paradox, to ſay that there was probably leſs miſery when there was leſs munificence.

If an increaſed benevolence now ranges through and relieves a wider compaſs of diſtreſs; yet ſtill, if thoſe examples of luxury and diſſipation which promote that diſtreſs are ſtill *more* increaſed, this makes the good done bear little proportion to the evil promoted. If the miſeries removed by the growth of charity fall, both in number and weight, far below thoſe which are cauſed by the growth of vice and diſorder; if we find that, though bounty is extended, yet thoſe corruptions which make bounty ſo neceſſary are extended alſo, almoſt beyond calculation; if it appear that, though more objects are relieved by our money, yet incomparably more are debauched by our licentiouſneſs—the balance perhaps will not

not turn out ſo decidedly in favour of the times as we are willing to imagine.

If then the moſt valuable ſpecies of charity is that which prevents diſtreſs by preventing or leſſening vice, the greateſt and moſt inevitable cauſe of want,—we ought not ſo highly to exalt the bounty of the great in the preſent day, in preference to that broad ſhade of protection, patronage, and maintenance, which the wide-ſpread bounty of their forefathers ſtretched out over whole villages, I had almoſt ſaid whole provinces. When a few noblemen in a county, like their own ſtately oaks (paternal oaks! which were not often ſet upon a card) extended their ſheltering branches to ſhield all the underwood of the foreſt—when there exiſted a kind of paſſive charity, a negative ſort of benevolence, which did good of itſelf; and without effort, exertion, or expence, produced the effect of all, and performed the beſt functions of bounty, though it did not aſpire to the dignity of its name—it was ſimply this:—*great people ſtaid*

ſtaid at home; and the ſober pomp and orderly magnificence of a noble family, reſiding at their own caſtle great part of the year, contributed in the moſt natural way to the maintenance of the poor; and in a good degree prevented their diſtreſs, which it muſt however thankfully be confeſſed it is the laudable object of modern bounty to relieve. A man of fortune might not then, it is true, ſo often dine in public for the benefit of the poor; but the poor were more regularly and comfortably fed with the abundant crumbs which then fell from the rich man's table. Whereas it cannot be denied that the prevailing mode of living has pared real hoſpitality to the very quick; and, though the remark may be thought ridiculous, it is a material diſadvantage to the poor that the introduction of the modern ſtyle of luxury has rendered the remains of the moſt coſtly table but of ſmall value.

But even allowing the boaſted ſuperiority of modern benevolence, ſtill it will not be incon-

inconſiſtent with the object of the preſent deſign, to enquire whether the diffuſion of this branch of charity, though the moſt lovely offspring of religion, be yet any poſitive proof of the prevalence of religious principle? and whether it be not the faſhion rather to conſider benevolence as a ſubſtitute for Chriſtianity than as an evidence of it?

It ſeems to be one of the reigning errors among the better ſort, to reduce all religion into benevolence, and all benevolence into alms-giving. The wide and comprehenſive idea of Chriſtian charity is compreſſed into the ſlender compaſs of a little pecuniary relief. This ſpecies of benevolence is indeed a bright gem among the ornaments of a Chriſtian; but by no means furniſhes all the jewels of his crown, which derives its luſtre from the aſſociated radiance of every chriſtian grace. Beſides, the genuine virtues are all of the ſame family; and it is only by being ſeen in company with each other and with Piety their common parent, that they are certainly known to be legitimate.

But it is the property of the *chriſtian* virtues, that, like all other amiable members of the ſame family, while each is doing its own particular duty, it is contributing to the proſperity of the reſt; and the larger the family the better they live together, as no one can advance itſelf without labouring for the advancement of the whole: thus, no man can be benevolent on chriſtian principles without ſelf-denial; and ſo of the other virtues: each is connected with ſome other, and all with religion.

I already anticipate the obvious and hackneyed reply, that "whoever be the inſtru-
"ment, and whatever be the motive of
"bounty, ſtill the poor are equally relieved,
"and therefore the end is the ſame." And it muſt be confeſſed that thoſe compaſſionate hearts, who cannot but be earneſtly anxious that the diſtreſſed ſhould be relieved at any rate, ſhould not too ſcrupulouſly enquire into any cauſe of which the effect is ſo beneficial. Nor indeed will candour ſcrutinize too curiouſly into the errors of

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any life of which benevolence will always be allowed to be the ſhining ornament, while it does not pretend to be the atoning virtue.

Let me not be miſrepreſented, as if I were ſeeking to detract from the value of this amiable feeling; we do not ſurely lower the practice by ſeeking to ennoble the principle; the action will not be impaired by mending the motive: and no one will be likely to give the poor leſs becauſe he ſeeks to pleaſe God more.

One cannot then help wiſhing that pecuniary bounty were not only not practiſed, but that it were not ſometimes enjoined too, as a redeeming virtue. In many converſations (I had almoſt ſaid in many charity-ſermons) it is inſinuated as if a little almsgiving could pay off old ſcores contracted by favourite indulgences. This, though often done by well-meaning men to advance the intereſts of ſome preſent pious purpoſe, yet has the miſchievous effect of thoſe medicines which, while they may re-

lieve

lieve a local complaint, are yet undermining the general habit.

That great numbers who are not influenced by ſo high a principle as Chriſtianity holds out, are yet truly compaſſionate without hypocriſy and without oſtentation, who can doubt? But who that feels the beauty of benevolence can avoid being ſolicitous, not only that its offerings ſhould comfort the receiver, but return in bleſſings to the boſom of the giver, by ſpringing from ſuch motives, and being accompanied by ſuch a temper as ſhall redound to his eternal good! For that the benefit is the ſame to the object, whatever be the character of the benefactor, is but an uncomfortable view of things to a real Chriſtian, whoſe compaſſion reaches to the ſouls of men. Such a one longs to ſee the charitable giver as happy as he is endeavouring to make the object of his bounty; but ſuch a one knows that no happineſs can be fully and finally enjoyed but on the ſolid baſis of Chriſtian piety.

For

For as religion is not, on the one hand, merely an opinion or a ſentiment, ſo neither is it, on the other, merely an act or a performance; but it is a diſpoſition, a habit, a temper: it is not a name, but a nature: it is a turning the whole mind to God: it is a concentration of all the powers and affections of the ſoul into one ſteady point, an uniform deſire to pleaſe *Him*. This deſire will naturally and neceſſarily manifeſt itſelf in our doing all the good we can to our fellow-creatures in every poſſible way; for it will be found that neither of the two parts into which practical religion is divided, can be performed with any degree of perfection but by thoſe who unite both: as it may be queſtioned if any man really *does* "love his neighbour as himſelf," who does not firſt endeavour to "love God with all "his heart." As genius has been defined to be ſtrong general powers of mind, accidentally determined to ſome particular purſuit, ſo piety may be denominated a ſtrong general diſpoſition of the heart to every thing

thing that is right, breaking forth into every excellent action, as the occasion presents itself. The temper must be ready in the mind, and the whole heart must be prepared and trained to every act of virtue to which it may be called out. For religious principles are like the military exercise; they keep up an habitual state of preparation for actual service; and, by never relaxing the discipline, the real Christian is ready for every duty to which he may be commanded. Right actions best prove the existence of religion in the heart; but they are evidences, not causes.

Whether therefore a man's charitable actions proceed from religious principle, he will be best able to ascertain by scrutinizing into what is the general disposition of his time and fortune, and by observing whether his pleasures and expences are habitually regulated with a view to enable him to be more or less useful to others.

It is in vain that he possess what is called by the courtesy of fashion *the best heart in the*

the world (a character we every day hear applied to the libertine and the prodigal) if he squander his time and estate in such a round of extravagant indulgences and thoughtless dissipation as leaves him little money and less leisure for nobler purposes. It makes but little difference whether a man is prevented from doing good by hard-hearted parsimony or an unprincipled extravagance; the stream of usefulness is equally cut off by both.

The mere *casual* benevolence of any man can have little claim to solid esteem; nor does any charity deserve the name, which does not grow out of a steady conviction that it is his bounden duty; which does not spring from a settled propensity to obey the whole will of God; which is not therefore made a part of the general plan of his conduct; and which does not lead him to order the whole scheme of his affairs with an eye to it.

He therefore who does not habituate himself to certain interior restraints, who does

does not live in a regular courſe of ſelf-renunciation, will not be likely often to perform acts of beneficence, when it becomes neceſſary to convert to ſuch purpoſes any of that time or money which appetite, temptation, or vanity ſolicit him to divert to other purpoſes.

And ſurely he who ſeldom ſacrifices one darling indulgence, who does not ſubtract one gratification from the inceſſant round of his enjoyments, when the indulgence would obſtruct his capacity of doing good, or when the ſacrifice would enlarge his power, does not deſerve the name of *benevolent*. And for ſuch an unequivocal criterion of charity, to whom are we are to look but to the conſcientious Chriſtian? No other ſpirit but that by which he is governed, can ſubdue ſelf-love: and where ſelf-love is the predominant paſſion, benevolence can have but a feeble, or an accidental dominion.

Now if we look around, and remark the exceſſes of luxury, the coſtly diverſions,

and the intemperate diſſipation in which numbers of profeſſing Chriſtians indulge themſelves, can any ſtretch of candour, can even that tender ſentiment by which we are enjoined "to hope" and to "believe all "things," enable us to hope and believe that ſuch are actuated by a ſpirit of Chriſtian benevolence, merely becauſe we ſee them perform ſome caſual acts of charity, which the ſpirit of the world can contrive to make extremely compatible with a voluptuous life; and the coſt of which, after all, bears but little proportion to that of any one vice, or even vanity!

Men will not believe that there is hardly any one human good quality which will know and keep its proper bounds, without the reſtraining influence of religious principle. There is, for inſtance, great danger leſt a conſtant attention to ſo right a practice as an invariable œconomy, ſhould incline the heart to the love of money. Nothing can effectually counteract this natural propenſity but the Chriſtian habit of devot-

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ing thoſe retrenched expences to ſome good purpoſe; and then œconomy, inſtead of narrowing the heart, will enlarge it, by inducing a conſtant aſſociation of benevolence with frugality. An habitual attention to the wants of others is the only wholeſome regulator of our own expences; and carries with it a whole train of virtues, diſintereſtedneſs, ſobriety, and temperance. And thoſe who live in the cuſtom of levying conſtant taxes on their vanities for ſuch purpoſes, ſerve the poor ſtill leſs than they ſerve themſelves. For if they are charitable upon true Chriſtian principles, "they are "laying up for themſelves a good found-"ation againſt the time to come."

Thus when a vein of Chriſtianity runs through the whole maſs of man's life, it gives a new value to all his actions, and a new character to all his views. It tranſmutes prudence and œconomy into Chriſtian virtues; and every offering that is preſented on the altar of charity becomes truly conſecrated, when it is the gift of obedience,

 and

and the price of ſelf-denial. Piety is that fire from heaven that can alone kindle the ſacrifice, which through the mediation and interceſſion of our great High Prieſt "will "go up for a memorial before God."

On the other hand, when any act of bounty is performed by way of compoſition with our Maker, either as a purchaſe or an expiation of unallowed indulgences; though, even in this caſe, God (who makes all the paſſions of men ſubſervient to his good purpoſes) can make the gift equally beneficial to the receiver, yet it is ſurely not too ſevere to ſay, that to the giver ſuch acts are an unfounded dependence, a deceitful refuge, a broken ſtaff.

CHAP. III.

The Neglect of Religious Education, both a Cause and a Consequence of the Decline of Christianity.—No Moral Restraints.—Religion only incidentally taught, not as a Principle of Action. A few of the many Causes which dispose the Young to entertain low Opinions of Religion.

Let not the truly pious be offended, as if, in the present chapter, which is intended to treat of the notorious neglect of Religious Education, I meant to insinuate that the principles and tempers of Christianity may be formed in the young mind, by the mere mechanical operation of early institution, without the co-operating aid of the Holy Spirit of God. To imply this would be indeed to betray a lamentable ignorance of human nature, of the disorder that sin has introduced, of the inefficacy of mere human means; and entirely to mis-

take the genius, and overlook the moſt obvious and important truths of our holy religion.

It muſt however be allowed, that the ſupreme Being works chiefly by means; and though it be confeſſed that no defect of education, no corruption of manners can place any out of the reach of the Divine influences, (for it is under ſuch circumſtances perhaps that ſome of the moſt extraordinary inſtances of Divine grace have been manifeſted,) yet it muſt be owned, that inſtructing children in principles of religion, and giving them early habits of temperance and piety, is the way in which we may moſt confidently expect the Divine bleſſing. And that it is a work highly pleaſing to God, and which will be moſt aſſuredly accompanied by his gracious energy, we may judge from what he ſays of his faithful ſervant Abraham; "I know him that he will "command his children, and his houſe-"hold after him, and they ſhall keep the "way of the Lord."

But

But religion is the only thing in which we ſeem to look for the end, without making uſe of the means; and yet it would not be more ſurpriſing if we were to expect that our children ſhould become artiſts and ſcholars without being bred to arts and languages, than it is to look for a Chriſtian world, without a Chriſtian education.

The nobleſt objects can yield no delight, if there be not in the mind a diſpoſition to reliſh them. There muſt be a congruity between the mind and the object, in order to produce any capacity of enjoyment. To the Mathematician, demonſtration is pleaſure; to the Philoſopher, the ſtudy of nature; to the Voluptuary, the gratification of his appetite; to the Poet, the pleaſures of the imagination. Theſe objects they each reſpectively purſue, as pleaſures adapted to that part of their nature which they have been accuſtomed to indulge and cultivate.

Now as men will be apt to act conſiſtent-l with their general views and habitual tendencies,

tendencies, would it not be abſurd to expect that the philoſopher ſhould look for his ſovereign good at a ball, or the ſenſualiſt in the pleaſures of intellect or piety? None of theſe ends are anſwerable to the general views of the reſpective purſuer; they are not correſpondent to his ideas; they are not commenſurate to his aims. The ſublimeſt pleaſures can afford little gratification where a taſte for them has not been previouſly formed. A clown, who ſhould hear a ſcholar or an artiſt talk of the delights of a library, a picture-gallery, or a concert, could not gueſs at the nature of the pleaſures they afford; nor would his being introduced to them give him much clearer ideas; becauſe he would bring to them an eye blind to proportion, an underſtanding new to ſcience, and an ear deaf to harmony.

Shall we expect then, ſince men can only become ſcholars by diligent labour, that they ſhall become Chriſtians by mere chance? Shall we be ſurpriſed if thoſe do not fulfil

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the offices of religion, who are not trained to an acquaintance with them? And will it not be obvious that it muſt be ſome other thing beſides the abſtruſeneſs of creeds, which has tended to make Chriſtianity unfaſhionable, and piety obſolete?

It probably will not be diſputed, that in no age have the paſſions of our high-born youth been ſo early freed from all curb and reſtraint. In no age has the paternal authority been ſo contemptuouſly treated, or every ſpecies of ſubordination ſo diſdainfully trampled upon. In no age have ſimple, and natural, and youthful pleaſures ſo early loſt their power over the mind; nor was ever one great ſecret of virtue and happineſs, the ſecret of being *cheaply pleaſed*, ſo little underſtood.

A taſte for coſtly, or artificial, or tumultuous pleaſures cannot be gratified, even by their moſt ſedulous purſuers, at every moment; and what wretched management is it in the œconomy of human happineſs, ſo to contrive, as that the enjoyment ſhall

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be rare and difficult, and the intervals long and languid! Whereas real and unadulterated pleafures occur perpetually to him who cultivates a tafte for truth and nature, and fcience and virtue. But thefe fimple and tranquil enjoyments cannot but be infipid to him whofe paffions have been prematurely excited by agitating pleafures, or whofe tafte has been depraved by fuch as are debafing and frivolous; for it is of more confequence to virtue than fome good people are willing to allow, to preferve the tafte pure, and the judgment found. A vitiated intellect has no fmall connection with depraved morals.

Since amufements of fome kind are neceffary to all ages (I fpeak now with an eye to mere human enjoyment) why fhould it not be an object of early care, to keep a due proportion of them in referve for thofe future feafons of life, in which they will be fo much more needed? Why fhould there not, even for this purpofe, be adopted a fyftem of falutary reftriction, to be ufed

by parents toward their children, by inſtructors toward their pupils, and in the progreſs of life by each man toward himſelf? In a word, why ſhould not the ſame reaſons, which have induced us to tether inferior animals, ſuggeſt the expediency of, in ſome ſort, tethering man alſo? Since nothing but experience ſeems to teach him, that if he be allowed to anticipate his future poſſeſſions, and trample all the flowery fields of real, as well as thoſe of imaginary and artificial enjoyment, he not only endures preſent diſguſt, but defaces and deſtroys all the rich materials of his future happineſs; and leaves himſelf, for the reſt of his life, nothing but ravaged fields and barren ſtubble.

But the great and radical defect, and that which comes more immediately within the preſent deſign, ſeems to be, that in general the characteriſtical principles of Chriſtianity are not early and ſtrongly infuſed into the mind: that religion, if taught at all, is rather taught incidentally, as a thing of

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ſubordinate value, than as the leading principle of human actions, the great animating ſpring of human conduct. Were the high influential principles of the Chriſtian religion anxiouſly and early inculcated, we ſhould find that thoſe lapſes from virtue, to which paſſion and temptation afterwards too frequently ſolicit, would be more eaſily recoverable.

For though the evil propenſities of fallen nature, and the bewitching allurements of pleaſure, will too often ſeduce even thoſe of the beſt education into devious paths, yet we ſhall find that men will ſeldom be *incurably* wicked unleſs that internal corruption of principle has taken place, which teaches them how to juſtify iniquity by argument, and to confirm evil conduct by the ſanction of falſe reaſoning; or where there is a total ignorance of the very nature and deſign of Chriſtianity, which ignorance can only exiſt where early religious inſtruction has been entirely nelected.

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The errors occaſioned by the violence of paſſion may be reformed, but ſyſtematic wickedneſs will be only fortified by time; and no decreaſe of ſtrength, no decay of appetite, can weaken the power of a pernicious principle. He who deliberately commits a bad action, puts himſelf indeed out of the path of ſafety; but he who adopts a falſe principle, not only throws himſelf into the enemy's country, but burns the ſhips, breaks the bridge, cuts off every retreat by which he might hope one day to return into his own.

It is remarkable, that in almoſt all the celebrated characters of whom we have an account in former periods of the Engliſh Hiſtory, we find a ſerious attention to religion diſcovering itſelf at the cloſe of life, however the preceding years might have been miſemployed. We meet with ſtriking examples of this kind amongſt ſtateſmen, amongſt philoſophers, amongſt men of buſineſs, and even amongſt men of pleaſure. We have on record the dying ſentiments of

Walsingham, of *Smith*, of *Hatton*, the favourites of Queen Elizabeth. We fee, in the following reign, *Raleigh* fupporting himfelf by religion under the feverity of his fate; *Bacon* feeking comfort in devotion amidft his difgraces; and *Wotton*, after having been ambaffador to almoft every court in Europe, taking refuge at laft in a pious retirement at Eton college. But to enumerate inftances would be endlefs, when, in fact, we fcarcely difcover a fingle inftance to the contrary. In thofe times, it was confidered as a matter even of common decency, that advanced age fhould poffefs, at leaft, the exterior of piety; and we have every reafon to believe that an irreligious old man would have been pointed at as a fort of monfter.

But is this the cafe in our day? Do we now commonly perceive in any rank that difpofition to clofe life religioufly, which at the period to which I have alluded was fo general even in the fafhionable world? I fear it is fo far the reverfe, that if Pope had been

been our contemporary, and were now compofing his famous Ethical Poem, he could not hazard even that light remark,

That beads and prayer books are the toys of age,

without grofsly violating probability.

But to what caufe are we to afcribe that fuperannuated impiety, which feems to diftinguifh the prefent from the preceding generations? Is it not chiefly owing to the neglect of early religious inftruction, which now for fo many years has been gaining ground among us? In the laft age even public fchools were places, no lefs of Chriftian than of claffical inftitution: and the omiffion of religious worfhip, whether public or private, was deemed, at leaft, as cenfurable a fault as the neglect of a leffon. Parents had not yet imbibed that maxim of modern refinement, that religious inftruction ought to be deferred until the mind be capable of chufing for itfelf—that is, until it be fo pre-occupied as to leave neither room nor relifh for the articles of

Chriſtian faith, or the rules of Chriſtian obedience. The advice of the wiſe king of Iſrael of "training up a child in the way "he ſhould go," had not then become obſolete; and the truth of his aſſertion, in the remaining clauſe of the paſſage, was happily realized in the ſincere, though late, return of many a wanderer.

Even in the very laws of our nature, there ſeems to be a gracious proviſion for promoting the final efficacy of early religious inſtruction. When the old man has no longer any reliſh left for his accuſtomed gratifications, in what way does he endeavour to fill up the void? Is it not by ſending back his thoughts to his early years, and endeavouring to live over again in idea thoſe ſcenes which, in this diſtant retroſpect, appear far more delightful than he had found them to be at the actual period of enjoyment? Diſguſted at every thing around him, and diſappointed in thoſe purſuits to which he had once looked forward with all the ardour of hope; but to which he

he now feels he has facrificed in vain, his quiet, and perhaps his integrity, he takes a penfive pleafure in reviewing the feafon when his mind was yet cheerful and innocent; and even the very cares and anxieties of that happy period appear to him now, in a more captivating form than any pleafures he can yet hope to enjoy. What then is more natural, I had almoft faid more certain, than that if the principles of religion were inculcated, and the feelings of devotion excited in his mind in that moft fufceptible feafon of life, they fhould now revive as well as other contemporary impreffions, and prefent themfelves in a point of view, the more interefting, becaufe, while all other inftances of youthful occupation can be only *recollected*, thofe may be called up into frefh exiftence, and be enjoyed even more perfectly than before.

The defects of memory alfo, which old age induces, will, in this inftance, affift rather than obftruct. It almoft univerfally

happens, that the more recent tranſactions are thoſe ſooneſt forgotten, while the events of youth and childhood are remembered with accuracy. If therefore pious principles have been implanted, they will, even by the courſe of nature, be recollected, while thoſe things which moſt contributed to hinder their growth, are ſwept from the memory. What a powerful encouragement then does this conſideration afford! or rather what an indiſpenſible obligation does it lay upon parents, to ſtore the minds of their children with the ſeeds of piety! And on the other hand, what unnatural barbarity is it, irretrievably to ſhut up this laſt refuge of the wretched, by a neglect of this duty; and to render it impoſſible, for thoſe who had "ſtood all the day idle," to be called (at leaſt without a miracle) even at the eleventh hour!

No one ſurely will impute to bigotry or enthuſiaſm, the lamenting, or even remonſtrating againſt ſuch deſperate negligence; nor can it be deemed illiberal to inquire,

Whether

Whether even a ſtill greater evil does not exiſt? I mean, Whether pernicious principles are not as ſtrenuouſly inculcated as thoſe of real virtue and happineſs are diſcountenanced? Whether young men are not expreſsly taught to take cuſtom and faſhion as the ultimate and excluſive ſtandard by which to try their principles and to weigh their actions? Whether ſome idol of falſe honour be not conſecrated and ſet up for them to worſhip? Whether, even among the better ſort, reputation be not held out as a motive of ſufficient energy to produce virtue, in a world where yet the greateſt vices are every day practiſed openly, without at all obſtructing the reception of thoſe who practiſe them into the beſt company? Whether reſentment be not ennobled; and pride, and many other paſſions, erected into honourable virtues—virtues not leſs repugnant to the genius and ſpirit of Chriſtianity than obvious and groſs vices? Will it be thought impertinent to enquire if the awful doctrines of a perpetually preſent Deity, and

and a future righteous judgment, are early impreſſed and laſtingly engraven on the hearts and conſciences of our high-born youth?

Perhaps, if there be any one particular in which we fall remarkably below the politer nations of antiquity, it is in that part of education which has a reference to purity of mind, and the diſcipline of the heart.

The great ſecret of religious education, which ſeems baniſhed from the preſent practice, conſiſts in training young men to an habitual interior reſtraint, an early government of the affections, and a courſe of ſelf-controul over thoſe tyrannizing inclinations which have ſo natural a tendency to enſlave the human heart. Without this habit of moral reſtraint, which is one of the fundamental laws of Chriſtian virtue, though men may, from natural temper, often *do* good, yet it is impoſſible that they ſhould ever *be* good. Without the vigorous exerciſe of this controuling principle, the

the beſt diſpoſitions and the moſt amiable qualities will go but a little way towards eſtabliſhing a virtuous character. For the beſt diſpoſitions will be eaſily overcome by the concurrence of paſſion and temptation, in a heart where the paſſions have not been accuſtomed to this wholeſome diſcipline: and the moſt amiable qualities will but more eaſily betray their poſſeſſor, unleſs the heart be fortified by repeated acts and long habits of reſiſtance.

In this, as in various other inſtances, we may bluſh at the ſuperiority of Pagan inſtitution. Were the Roman youth taught to imagine themſelves always in the awful preſence of Cato, in order to habituate them betimes to ſuppreſs baſe ſentiments, and to excite ſuch as were generous and noble? And ſhould not the Chriſtian youth be continually reminded, that a greater than Cato is here? Should they not be trained to the habit of acting under the conſtant impreſſion, that *He* to whom they muſt one day be accountable for in-

tentions, as well as words and actions, is witnefs to the one as well as the other? that he not only is "about their path," but "underftands their very thoughts?"[a]

Were the difciples of a Pagan * leader taught that it was a motive fufficient to compel their obedience to any rule, whether they liked it or not, that it had the authority of their teacher's name? were the bare words, *the mafter hath faid it*, fufficient to fettle all difputes, and to fubdue all reluctance? And fhall the fcholars of a more divine teacher, who have a code of laws written by God himfelf, be contended with a lower rule, or abide by a meaner authority? And is any argument drawn from human confiderations likely to operate more forcibly on a dependant being, than that fimple but grand affertion, with which fo many of the precepts of our religion are introduced—Becaufe, THUS SAITH THE LORD?

* Pythagoras.

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It is doing but little, in the infufion of firft principles, to obtain the bare affent of the underftanding to the exiftence of one Supreme Power, unlefs the heart and affections go along with the conviction, by our conceiving of that power as intimately connected with ourfelves. A feeling temper will be but little affected with the cold idea of a *geometrical* God, as the excellent Pafcal expreffes it, who merely adjufts all the parts of matter, and keeps the elements in order. Such a mind will be but little moved, unlefs he be taught to confider his Maker under the interefting and endearing reprefentation which revealed religion gives of him. That "God "is," will be to him rather an alarming than a confolatory idea; till he be perfuaded of the fubfequent propofition, that "he is "a Rewarder of them that diligently feek "him." Nay, if natural religion *does* even acknowledge one awful attribute, that "God is juft," it will only increafe the terror of a tender confcience, till it be learned

learned from the fountain of truth, that he is "the Juſtifier of him who believeth in "Jeſus."

But if the great ſanctions of our religion are not deeply engraven on the heart, where ſhall we look for any other adequate curb to the fiery ſpirit of youth? For, let the elements be ever ſo kindly mixed in a human compoſition, let the natural temper be ever ſo amiable, ſtill whenever a man ceaſes to think himſelf an accountable being, what motive can he have for reſiſting a ſtrong temptation to a preſent good, when he has no dread that he ſhall thereby forfeit a greater future good?

It may perhaps be objected, that this deep ſenſe of religion would interfere with the general purpoſe of education, which is deſigned to qualify men for the buſineſs of human life, and not to train up a race of monks and aſcetics.

There is however ſo little real ſolidity in this ſpecious objection, that I am firmly perſuaded, that if religious principles were more

more deeply impreſſed on the heart, even the things of this world would be much better carried on. For where are we to look for all the qualities which conſtitute the man of buſineſs; for punctuality, diligence, and application, for ſuch attention in doing every thing in its proper day, (the great hinge on which buſineſs turns,) as among men of principle? Oeconomy of time, truth in obſerving his word, never daring to deceive or to diſappoint—theſe form the very eſſence of an active and an uſeful character; and for theſe to whom ſhall we moſt naturally look? Who is ſo little likely to be "ſlothful in buſineſs" as he who is "fervent in ſpirit?" And will not he be moſt regular in dealing with men, who is moſt diligent in "ſerving the "Lord?"

But, it may be ſaid, allowing that religion does not neceſſary ſpoil a man of *buſineſs*, yet it would effectually defeat thoſe accompliſhments, and counteract that

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fine breeding, which effentially conftitute the *gentleman.*

This again is fo far from being a natural confequence, that, fuppofing all the other real advantages of parts, education, and fociety, to be equally taken into the account, there is no doubt but that, in point of true politenefs, a real Chriftian would beat the world at its own weapons, the world itfelf being judge.

It muft be confeffed that, in the prefent corrupt ftate of things, there is fcarcely any one contrivance for which we are more obliged to the inventions of mankind than for that of politenefs, as there is perhaps no fcreen in the world which hides fo many ugly fights; yet while we allow that there never was fo admirable a fubftitute for real goodnefs as good breeding, it is certain that the principles of Chriftianity put into action, would of themfelves produce more genuine politenefs than any maxims drawn from motives of human vanity or worldly

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convenience. If *love*, *peace*, *joy*, *long-suffering*, *gentleneſs*, *patience*, *goodneſs*, and *meekneſs*, may be thought inſtruments to produce ſweetneſs of manners, theſe we are expreſsly told are "the fruits of the "ſpirit." If mourning with the afflicted, rejoicing with the happy; if to "eſteem "others better than ourſelves;" if "to "take the loweſt room;" if "not to ſeek "our own;" if "not to behave ourſelves "unſeemly; if "not to ſpeak great ſwel-"ling words of vanity"—if theſe are amiable, engaging, and polite parts of behaviour, then would the documents of Saint Paul make as true a fine gentleman as the *Courtier of Caſtiglione*, or even the *Letters of Lord Cheſterfield* himſelf. Then would ſimulation, and diſſimulation, and all the nice ſhades and delicate gradations of paſſive and active deceit, be rendered ſuperfluous; and the affections of every heart be won by a ſhorter and a ſurer way than by the elegant obliquities of this late popular preceptor, whoſe miſchiefs have outlived

outlived his reputation; and who, notwithstanding the present just declension of his fame, greatly helped, during its transient meridian, to relax the general nerve of virtue, and has left a taint upon the public morals, of which we are still sensible.

That self-abasement then, which is inseparable from true Christianity, and the external signs of which good-breeding knows so well how to assume; and those charities which suggest invariable kindness to others, even in the smallest things, would, if left to their natural workings, produce that gentleness which it is one great object of a polite education to imitate. They would produce it too without effort and without exertion; for being inherent in the substance, it would naturally discover itself on the surface.

For however useful the institutions of polished society may be found, yet they can never alter the eternal difference between right and wrong, or convert appearances into realities; they cannot transform

decency

decency into virtue, nor make politeneſs paſs for principle. And the advocates for faſhionable breeding ſhould be humbled to reflect, that every convention of artificial manners was adopted not to *cure*, but to *conceal*, deformity: that though the ſuperficial civilities of elegant life tend to make this corrupt world a more tolerable place than it would be without them, yet they never will be conſidered as a ſubſtitute for truth, nor a commutation for virtue, by HIM who is to paſs the definitive ſentence on the characters of men.

Among the many prejudices which the young and the gay entertain againſt religion, one is, that it is the declared enemy to wit and genius. But, ſays one of its wittieſt champions *, "Piety enjoins no "man to be dull:" and it will be found, on a fair enquiry, that though it cannot be denied that irreligion has had able men for its advocates, yet they have never been the *moſt* able. Nor can any learned profeſſion,

* Dr. South.

any department in letters or in ſcience, produce a champion on the ſide of unbelief, but Chriſtianity has a ſtill greater name to oppoſe to it; *philoſophers* themſelves being judges.

He who ſtudied the book of nature with a ſcrutiny which has ſcarcely been permitted to any other mortal eye, was deeply learned in the book of God *. And the ableſt writer on the intellect of man, has left one of the ableſt treatiſes *on the Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity*. This eſſay of Mr. Locke on the *Human Underſtanding*, will ſtand up to lateſt ages, as a monument of wiſdom; while Hume's poſthumous work, *the Eſſay on Suicide*, which had excited ſuch large expectations, has been long ſince forgotten †.

Paſcal

* Sir Iſaac Newton.

† The Eſſay on Suicide was publiſhed ſoon after Mr. Hume's death. It might mortify his liberal mind (if matter and motion were capable of conſciouſneſs) to learn, that this his dying legacy, the laſt con-

Paſcal has proved that as much rhetoric and logic too may be ſhown in defending revelation as in attacking it. His geometrical ſpirit was not likely to take up with

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concentrated effect of his genius and his principles, ſent from the grave as it were, by a man ſo juſtly renowned in other branches of literature, produced no ſenſation on the public mind. And that the precious information that every man had a right to be his own executioner, was conſidered as a privilege ſo little deſirable, that it probably had not the glory of converting one *croſs road* into a cimetery. It is to the credit of this country that fewer copies of this work were ſold than perhaps ever was the caſe with a writer of ſo much eminence. A more impotent act of wickedneſs has ſeldom been atchieved, or one which has had the glory of making fewer perſons wicked or miſerable. That cold and cheerleſs oblivion which he held out as a refuge to beings who had ſolaced themſelves with the ſoothing hope of immortality has, by a memorable retribution, overſhadowed his laſt labour; the Eſſay on Suicide being already as much forgotten as he promiſed the beſt men that they themſelves would be. And this favourite work became at once a prey to that forgetfulneſs to which he had conſigned the whole human race.

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any proofs but ſuch as came as near to demonſtration as the nature of the ſubject would admit. *Eraſmus* in his writings on the ignorance of the Monks, and the Provincial Letters on the fallacies of the Jeſuits, while they exhibit as entire a freedom from bigotry, exhibit alſo as much pointed wit, and as much ſound reaſoning, as can be found in the whole maſs of modern Philoſophy.

But while the young adopt the opinion from one claſs of writers, that religious men are weak men, they acquire from another claſs a notion that they are ridiculous. And this opinion, by mixing itſelf with their common notions, and deriving itſelf from their very amuſements, is the more miſchievous, as it is imbibed without ſuſpicion, and entertained without reſiſtance.

One common medium through which they take this falſe view is, thoſe favourite works of wit and humour, ſo captivating to youthful imaginations, where no ſmall

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part of the author's ſucceſs perhaps has been owing to his dexterouſly introducing a pious character with ſo many virtues, that it is impoſſible not to love him; yet tinctured with ſo many abſurdities, that it is equally impoſſible not to laugh at him. The reader's memory will furniſh him with too many inſtances of what is here meant. The ſlighteſt touches of a witty malice can make the beſt character ridiculous. It is effected by any little aukwardneſs, abſence of mind, an obſolete phraſe, a formal pronunciation, a peculiarity of geſture. Or if ſuch a character be brought by unſuſpecting honeſty, and credulous goodneſs, into ſome fooliſh ſcrape, it will ſtamp on him an impreſſion of ridicule ſo indelible, that all his worth ſhall not be able to efface it: and the young, who do not always ſeparate their ideas very carefully, ſhall ever after, by this early and falſe aſſociation, conceive of piety as having ſomething eſſentially ridiculous in itſelf.

But one of the moſt infallible arts by which the inexperienced are engaged on the ſide of irreligion, is that popular air of candour, good-nature, and toleration, which it ſo invariably puts on. While ſincere piety is often accuſed of moroſeneſs and ſeverity, becauſe it cannot hear the doctrines on which it founds its eternal hopes derided without emotion; indifference and unbelief purchaſe the praiſe of candour at an eaſy price, becauſe they neither ſuffer grief nor expreſs indignation at hearing the moſt awful truths ridiculed, or the moſt ſolemn obligations ſet at nought. They do not engage on equal terms. The infidel appears good humoured from his very levity; but the Chriſtian cannot jeſt on ſubjects which involve his everlaſting ſalvation.

The ſcoffers whom young people hear talk, and the books they hear quoted, falſely charge their own injurious opinions on Chriſtianity, and then unjuſtly accuſe her of

of being the monſter they have made. They dreſs her up with the ſword of perſecution in one hand, and the flames of intolerance in the other; and then ridicule the ſober-minded for worſhipping an idol which their miſrepreſentation has rendered as malignant as Moloch. In the mean time they affect to ſeize on benevolence with excluſive appropriation as their own cardinal virtue, and to accuſe of a bigotted cruelty that narrow ſpirit which points out the perils of licentiouſneſs, and the terrors of a future account. And yet this benevolence, with all its tender mercies, is not afraid nor aſhamed to endeavour at ſnatching away from humble piety the comfort of a preſent hope, and the bright proſpect of a felicity that ſhall have no end. It does not however ſeem a very probable means of increaſing the ſtock of human happineſs, to plunder mankind of that principle, by the deſtruction of which friendſhip is robbed of its bond, ſociety of its ſecurity, patience of its motive, morality

 of

of its foundation, integrity of its reward, ſorrow of its conſolation, life of its balm, and death of its ſupport.*

It will not perhaps be one of the meaneſt advantages of a better ſtate that, as the will ſhall be reformed, ſo the judgment ſhall be rectified; that "evil ſhall no more "be called good," nor the "churl liberal;" nor the plunderer of our beſt poſſeſſion, our principles, *benevolent*. Then it will be evident that greater injury could not be done to truth, nor greater violence to language, than by attempting to wreſt from

* Young perſons too are liable to be miſled by that extreme diſingenuouſneſs of the new philoſophers, when writing on every thing and perſon connected with revealed religion. Theſe authors often quote ſatirical poets as grave hiſtorical authorities; for inſtance, becauſe Juvenal has ſaid that the Jews were ſo narrow-minded that they refuſed to ſhow a ſpring of water or the right road to an inquiring traveller who was not of their religion, I make little doubt but many an ignorant freethinker has actually gone away with the belief, that ſuch good-natured acts of information were actually forbidden by the law of Moſes.

Chriſtianity

Chriſtianity that benevolence which is in fact her moſt appropriate and peculiar attribute.—" A new commandment give I " unto you, that ye love one another." If benevolence be " good will to men," it was that which angelic meſſengers were not thought too high to announce, nor a much higher being than Angels too great to teach by his example, and to illuſtrate by his death. It was the criterion, the very watch word as it were, by which he intended his religion and his followers ſhould be diſtinguiſhed. " By this ſhall all men " know that ye are my diſciples, if ye " have love one to another." Beſides, it is the very genius of Chriſtianity to extirpate all ſelfiſhneſs, on whoſe vacated ground benevolence naturally and neceſſarily plants itſelf.

But not to run through all the particulars which obſtruct the growth of piety in young perſons, I ſhall only name one more. They hear much declamation from the faſhionable reaſoners againſt the contracted

and selfish spirit of Christianity—that it is of a sordid temper, works for pay, and looks for reward.

This jargon of French philosophy, which prates of pure disinterested goodness acting for its own sake, and equally despising punishment and disdaining recompense, indicates as little knowledge of human nature as of Christian revelation, when it addresses man as a being made up of pure intellect, without any mixture of passions, and who can be made happy without hope, and virtuous without fear. These Philosophers affect to be more independent than Moses, more disinterested than Christ himself; for "Moses had respect to the recompence of "reward;" and Christ "endured the cross "and despised the shame, for the joy that "was set before him."

A creature hurried away by the impulse of some impetuous inclination, is not likely to be restrained (if he be restrained at all) by a cold reflection on the beauty of virtue. If the dread of offending God, and incur-

ring his everlafting difpleafure, cannot ftop him, how fhall a weaker motive do it? When we fee that the powerful fanctions which religion holds out are too often an ineffectual curb; to think of attaining the fame end by feebler means, is as if one fhould expect to make a watch go the better by breaking the main-fpring; nay, as abfurd as if the philofopher who inculcates the doctrine fhould undertake, with one of his fingers, to lift an immenfe weight which had refifted the powers of the crane and the lever.

On calm and temperate fpirits indeed, in the hour of retirement, in the repofe of the paffions, in the abfence of temptation, virtue does feem to be her own adequate reward; and very lovely are the fruits fhe bears in preferving health, credit, and fortune. But on how few will this principle act! and even on them how often will its operation be fufpended! And though virtue for her own fake might have captivated a few hearts, which almoft feem caft in a

natural mould of goodneſs, yet no motive could, at all times, be ſo likely to reſtrain even theſe, (eſpecially under the preſſure of temptation,) as this ſimple aſſertion—*For all this, God will bring thee into judgment.*

It is the beauty of our religion, that it is not held out excluſively to a few ſelect ſpirits; that it is not an object of ſpeculation, or an exerciſe of ingenuity, but a *rule of life*, ſuited to every condition, capacity, and temper. It is the glory of the Chriſtian religion to *be*, what it was the glory of every ancient philoſophic ſyſtem *not* to be, *the religion of the people*; and that which conſtitutes its characteriſtic value, is its ſuitableneſs to the genius, condition, and neceſſities of all mankind.

For with whatſoever obſcurities it has pleaſed God to ſhadow ſome parts of his written word, yet he has graciouſly ordered, that whatever is neceſſary ſhould be perſpicuous alſo: and though, as to his adorable eſſence, "clouds and darkneſs are round "about him;" yet theſe are not the medium

through

through which he has left us to difcover our duty. In this, as in all other points, revealed religion has a decided fuperiority over all the ancient fyftems of philofophy, which were always in many refpects impracticable and extravagant, becaufe not framed from obfervations drawn from a perfect knowledge "of what was in man." Whereas the whole fcheme of the Gofpel is accommodated to real human nature; laying open its mortal difeafe, prefenting its only remedy; exhibiting rules of conduct, often difficult, indeed, but never impoffible; and where the rule was fo high that the practicability feemed defperate, holding out a living pattern, to elucidate the doctrine and to illuftrate the precept; offering everywhere the cleareft notions of what we have to hope, and what we have to fear; the ftrongeft injunctions of what we are to believe, and the moft explicit directions of what we are to do: with the moft encouraging offers of Divine affiftance for ftrengthening our faith and quickening our obedience.

In ſhort, whoever examines the wants of his own heart, and the appropriate aſſiſtance which the Goſpel furniſhes, will find them to be two tallies which exactly correſpond—an internal evidence, ſtronger perhaps than any other, of the truth of revelation.

This is the religion with which the ingenuous hearts of youth ſhould be warmed, and by which their minds, while pliant, ſhould be directed. This will afford a "lamp to their paths," ſtronger, ſteadier, brighter than the feeble and uncertain glimmer of a cold and comfortleſs philoſophy.

CHAP. IV.

Other Symptoms of the Decline of Chriſtianity —No Family-Religion—Corrupt or negligent Example of Superiors—The Self-denying and Evangelical Virtues held in Contempt —Neglect of encouraging and promoting Religion among Servants.

It was by no means the deſign of the preſent undertaking to make a general invective on the corrupt ſtate of manners, or even to animadvert on the conduct of the higher ranks, but inaſmuch as the corruption of that conduct, and the depravation of thoſe manners, appear to be a natural conſequence of the viſible decline of religion; and as operating in its turn, as a cauſe, on the inferior orders of ſociety.

Of the other obvious cauſes which contribute to this decline of morals, little will be ſaid. Nor is the preſent a romantic attempt

tempt to reſtore the ſimplicity of primitive manners. This is too literally an age of gold, to expect that it ſhould be ſo in the poetical and figurative ſenſe. It would be unjuſt and abſurd not to form our opinions and expectations from the preſent general ſtate of ſociety. And it would argue great ignorance of the corruption which commerce, and conqueſt, and riches, and arts neceſſarily introduce into a ſtate, to look for the ſame ſobermindedneſs, ſimplicity, and purity among the *dregs of Romulus*, as the ſevere and ſimple manners of elder Rome preſented.

But though it would be an attempt of deſperate hardihood, to controvert that maxim of the witty bard, that

> To mend the world's a vaſt deſign;

a popular aphoriſm, by the way, which has done no little miſchief, inaſmuch, as under the maſk of hopeleſſneſs it ſuggeſts an indolent acquieſcence; yet to make the beſt of the times in which we live; to fill up the

meaſure

meaſure of our own actual, particular, and individual duties; and to take care that the age ſhall not be the worſe for our having been caſt into it, ſeems to be the bare dictate of common probity, and not a romantic flight of impracticable perfection.

Is it then ſo very chimerical to imagine that the benevolent can be ſober-minded? Is it romantic to deſire that the good ſhould be conſiſtent? Is it abſurd to fancy that what has once been practiſed ſhould not now be impracticable?

It is impoſſible not to help regretting that it ſhould be the general temper of many of the leading perſons of that age which arrogates to itſelf the glorious character of the *age of benevolence*, to be kind, conſiderate, and compaſſionate, everywhere rather than at home; that the rich and the faſhionable ſhould be zealous in promoting religious as well as charitable inſtitutions abroad, and yet diſcourage every thing which looks like religion in their own families: that they ſhould be at a conſider-

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able expence in inſtructing the poor at a diſtance, and yet diſcredit piety among their own ſervants—thoſe more immediate objects of every man's attention, whom Providence has enabled to keep any; and for whoſe conduct he will be finally accountable, inaſmuch as he may have helped to corrupt it.

Is there any degree of pecuniary bounty without doors which can counteract the miſchief of a wrong example at home, or atone for that infectious laxity of principle which ſpreads corruption wherever its influence extends? Is not he the beſt benefactor to ſociety who ſets the beſt example, and who does not only the moſt good, but the leaſt evil? Will not that man, however liberal, very imperfectly promote virtue in the world at large, who neglects to diſſeminate its principles within the immediate ſphere of his own perſonal influence, by a correct conduct and a blameleſs behaviour? Can a generous but profligate perſon atone by his purſe for the diſorders of his life?

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Can he expect a bleſſing on his bounties, while he defeats their effect by a profane or even a careleſs converſation?

In moral as well as in political treatiſes, it is often aſſerted that it is a great evil to do no good: but it has not been perhaps enough inſiſted on, that it is a great good to do no evil. This ſpecies of goodneſs is not oſtentatious enough for popular declamation; and the value of this abſtinence from vice is perhaps not well underſtood but by Chriſtians, becauſe it wants the oſtenſible brilliancy of actual performance.

But as the *principles* of Chriſtianity are in no great repute, ſo their concomitant *qualities*, the evangelical virtues, are proportionably diſeſteemed. Let it however be remembered, that thoſe ſecret habits of ſelf-controul, thoſe interior and unobtruſive virtues, which excite no aſtoniſhment, kindle no emulation, and extort no praiſe, are at the ſame time the moſt difficult, and the moſt ſublime; and if Chriſtianity be true, will be the moſt graciouſly accepted

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by *him* who witneſſes the ſecret combat and the ſilent victory: while the ſplendid deeds which have the world for their witneſs, and immortal fame for their reward, ſhall perhaps coſt him who atchieved them leſs than it coſts a conſcientious Chriſtian to ſubdue one irregular inclination; a conqueſt which the world will never know; and, if it did, would probably deſpiſe.

Though great actions performed on human motives, are permitted by the ſupreme Diſpoſer to be equally beneficial to ſociety with ſuch as are performed on purer principles; yet it is an affecting conſideration, that, at the final adjuſtment of accounts, the politician who *raiſed* a ſtate, or the hero who *preſerved* it, may miſs of that favour of God which, if it was not his motive, will certainly not be his reward. And it is awful to reflect, as we viſit the monuments juſtly raiſed by public gratitude, or the ſtatues properly erected by well-earned admiration; it is awful, I ſay, to reflect on what may now be the unalterable condition of the illuſtrious

illuſtrious object of theſe deſerved but unavailing honours; and that he who has ſaved a ſtate may have loſt his own ſoul!

A Chriſtian life ſeems to conſiſt of two things, almoſt equally difficult; the adoption of good habits, and the exciſion of ſuch as are evil. No one ſets out on a religious courſe with a ſtock of native innocence, or actual freedom from ſin; for there is no ſuch ſtate in human life. The natural heart is not, as has been too often ſuppoſed, a blank paper, whereon the divine ſpirit has nothing to do but to ſtamp characters of goodneſs: no! many blots are to be eraſed, many defilements are to be cleanſed, as well as freſh impreſſions to be made.

The vigilant Chriſtian, therefore, who acts with an eye to the approbation of his Maker, rather than to that of mankind, to a future account, rather than to preſent glory, will find that, diligently to cultivate the "unweeded garden" of his own heart; to mend the ſoil; to clear the ground of its

indigenous vices, by practiſing the painful buſineſs of extirpation, will be that part of his duty which will coſt him moſt labour, and bring him leaſt credit: while the fair flower of one ſhewy action, produced with little trouble, and of which the very pleaſure is reward enough, ſhall gain him more praiſe than the eradication of the rankeſt weeds which over-run the natural heart.

But the Goſpel judges not after the manner of men; for it never fails to make the abſtinent virtues a previous ſtep to the right performance of the operative ones; and the relinquiſhing what is wrong to be a neceſſary prelude to the performance of what is right. It makes "ceaſing to do evil" the indiſpenſable preliminary to "learning to "do well." It continually ſuggeſts that ſomething is to be laid aſide, as well as to be practiſed. We muſt "hate vain thoughts," before we can "love God's law." We muſt lay aſide "malice and hypocriſy," to *enable* us "to receive the engrafted word." —Having "a conſcience void of offence;" "abſtaining

"abſtaining from fleſhly luſts;" "bring-"ing every thought into obedience;"—theſe are actions, or rather negations, which, though they never will obtain immortality from the chiſel of the ſtatuary, the declamation of the hiſtorian, or the panegyric of the poet, will however be "had in everlaſting remembrance," when the works of the ſtatuary, the hiſtorian, and the poet will be no more.

And, for our encouragement, it is obſervable that a more difficult Chriſtian virtue generally involves an eaſier one. A habit of ſelf-denial in permitted pleaſures, eaſily induces a victory over ſuch as are unlawful. And to ſit looſe to our own poſſeſſions, neceſſarily includes an exemption from coveting the poſſeſſions of others: and ſo on of the reſt.

Will it be difficult then to trace back to that want of early reſtraint noticed in the preceding chapter, that licence of behaviour which, having been indulged in youth, afterwards reigns uncontrouled in families;

and which having infected education in its first springs, taints all the streams of domestic virtue? And will it be thought strange that that same want of religious principle which corrupted our children, should corrupt our servants?

We scarcely go into any company without hearing some invective against the increased profligacy of this order of men; and the remark is made with as great an air of astonishment, as if the cause of the complaint were not as visible as the truth of it. It would be endless to point out instances in which the increased dissipation of their *betters* (as they are oddly called) has contributed to the growth of this evil. But it comes only within the immediate design of the present undertaking, to insist on the single circumstance of the almost total extermination of religion in fashionable families, as a cause adequate of itself to any consequence which depraved morals can produce.

Is there not a degree of injuſtice in perſons who expreſs ſtrong indignation at thoſe crimes which crowd our priſons, and furniſh our inceſſant executions, and who yet diſcourage not an internal principle of vice: ſince thoſe crimes are nothing more than that principle put into action? And it is no leſs abſurd than cruel, in ſuch of the great as lead diſorderly lives, to expect to prevent vice by the laws they make to reſtrain or puniſh it, while their own example is a perpetual ſource of temptation to commit it. If, by their own practice, they demonſtrate that they think a vicious life is the only happy one, with what colour of juſtice can they inflict penalties on others, who, by acting on the ſame principle, expect the ſame indulgence!

And indeed it is ſomewhat unreaſonable to expect very high degrees of virtue and probity from a claſs of people whoſe whole life, after they are admitted into diſſipated families, is one continued counteraction of

the principles in which they have probably been bred.

When a poor youth is tranſplanted from one of thoſe excellent inſtitutions which do honour to the preſent age, and give ſome hope of reforming the next, into the family of his noble benefactor in town, who has, perhaps, provided liberally for his inſtruction in the country; what muſt be his aſtoniſhment at finding the manner of life to which he is introduced diametrically oppoſite to that life to which he has been taught that ſalvation is alone annexed! He has been taught that it was his bounden duty to be devoutly thankful for his own ſcanty meal, perhaps of barley-bread; yet he ſees his noble lord ſit down every day

> Not to a dinner, but a hecatomb;

to a repaſt for which every element is plundered, and every climate impoveriſhed; for which nature is ranſacked, and art is exhauſted; without even the formal ceremony of

of a ſlight acknowledgment. It will be lucky for the maſter, if his ſervant does not happen to know that even the Pagans never ſat down to a repaſt without making a libation to their deities; and that the Jews did not eat a little fruit, or drink a cup of water, without an expreſſion of devout thankfulneſs.

Next to the law of God, he has been taught to reverence the law of the land, and to reſpect an act of parliament next to a text of Scripture: yet he ſees his honourable protector, publicly in his own houſe, engaged in the evening in playing at a game expreſsly prohibited by the laws, and againſt which perhaps he himſelf had been aſſiſting in the day to paſs an act.

While the contempt of religion was confined to wits and philoſophers, the effect was not ſo ſenſibly felt. But we cannot congratulate the ordinary race of mortals on their emancipation from old prejudices, or their indifference to ſacred uſages; as it is not at all viſible that the world is be-

come happier in proportion as it is become more enlightened. We might rejoice more in the boasted diffusion of light and freedom, were it not apparent that bankruptcies are grown more frequent, robberies more common, divorces more numerous, and forgeries more extensive—that more rich men die by their own hand, and more poor men by the hand of the executioner—than when Christianity was practised by the vulgar, and countenanced, at least, by the great.

Is it not to be regretted therefore, while the affluent are encouraging so many admirable schemes for promoting religion among the children of the poor, that they do not like to *perpetuate* the principle, by encouraging it in their own children and their servants also? Is it not pity, since these last are so moderately furnished with the good things of this life, to rob them of that bright reversion, the bare hope of which is a counterpoise to all the hardships they undergo here—especially since by diminishing

ing this future hope, we ſhall not be likely to add to their preſent uſefulneſs?

Still allowing, what has been already granted, that abſolute infidelity is not the reigning evil, and that ſervants will perhaps be more likely to ſee religion neglected than to hear it ridiculed,—would it not be a meritorious kindneſs in families of a better ſtamp, to furniſh them with more opportunities of learning and practiſing their duty? Is it not impolitic indeed, as well as unkind, to refuſe them any means of having impreſſed on their conſciences the operative principles of Chriſtianity? It is but little, barely not to *oppoſe* their going to church, not to *prevent* their doing their duty at home; their opportunities of doing both ought to be facilitated, by giving them, at certain ſeaſons, as few employments as poſſible that may interfere with both. Even when religion is by pretty general conſent baniſhed from our families at home, that only furniſhes a ſtronger reaſon why our families

families ſhould not be baniſhed from religion in the churches.

But if theſe opportunities are not made eaſy and convenient to them, their ſuperiors have no right to expect from them a zeal ſo far tranſcending their own, as to induce them to ſurmount difficulties for the ſake of duty. Religion is never once repreſented in ſcripture as a light attainment; it is never once illuſtrated by an eaſy, a quiet, or an indolent allegory. On the contrary, it is exhibited under the active figure of a combat, a race; ſomething expreſſive of exertion, activity, progreſs. And yet many are unjuſt enough to think that this warfare can be fought, though they themſelves are perpetually weakening the vigour of the combatant; this race be run, though they are inceſſantly obſtructing the progreſs of him who runs by ſome hard and interfering command. That our compaſſionate Judge, who "knoweth whereof we are "made, and remembereth that we are but "duſt,"

"duſt," is particularly touched with the feeling of *their* infirmities, can never be doubted; but what portion of forgiveneſs he will extend to thoſe who lay on their virtue hard burdens "too heavy for them "to bear," who ſhall ſay?

To keep an immortal being in a ſtate of ſpiritual darkneſs, is a poſitive diſobedience to *His* law, who when he beſtowed the Bible, no leſs than when he created the material world, ſaid, *Let there be light.* It were well, both for the advantage of maſter and ſervant, that the latter ſhould have the doctrines of the Goſpel frequently impreſſed on his heart; that his conſcience ſhould be made familiar with a ſyſtem which offers ſuch clear and intelligible propoſitions of moral duty. The ſtriking interrogation, "how ſhall I do this great "wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?" will perhaps operate as forcibly on an uncultivated mind, as the moſt eloquent eſſay to prove that man is not an accountable being. That once credited promiſe, that "they "who

"who have done well ſhall go into ever-"laſting life," will be more grateful to the ſpirit of a plain man, than that more elegant and diſintereſted ſentiment, that *virtue is its own reward.* That "he that "walketh uprightly walketh ſurely," is not on the whole a dangerous, or a miſleading maxim. And "well done, good "and faithful ſervant! I will make thee "ruler over many things," though offenſive to the liberal ſpirit of philoſophic dignity, is a comfortable ſupport to humble and ſuffering piety. That "we ſhould do "to others as we would they ſhould do to "us," is a portable meaſure of human duty, always at hand, as always referring to ſomething within himſelf, not amiſs for a poor man to carry conſtantly about with him, who has neither time nor learning to ſearch for a better. It is an univerſal and compendious law, ſo univerſal as to include the whole compaſs of ſocial obligation; ſo compendious as to be incloſed in ſo ſhort and plain an aphoriſm, that the dulleſt

 mind

mind cannot misapprehend, nor the weakest memory forget it. It is convenient for bringing out on all the ordinary occasions of life. We need not say "who shall go "up to heaven and bring it unto us, for "this word is very nigh unto thee, in thy "mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest "do it *."

For it is a very valuable part of the gospel of Christ, that though it is an entire and perfect system in its design; though it exhibits one great plan, from which complete trains of argument, and connected schemes of reasoning may be deduced; yet in compassion to the multitude, for whom this benevolent institution was in a good measure designed, and who could not have comprehended a long chain of propositions, or have embraced remote deductions, the most important truths of doctrine, and the most essential documents of virtue, are detailed in single maxims, and comprised in short sentences; inde-

* Deut. xxx. 11 and 12.

pendent

pendent of themſelves, yet making a neceſſary part of a conſummate whole; from a few of which principles the whole train of human virtues has been deduced, and many a perfect body of ethics has been framed.

If it be thought wonderful, that from ſo few letters of the alphabet, ſo few figures of arithmetic, ſo few notes in muſic, ſuch endleſs combinations ſhould have been produced in their reſpective arts; how far more beautiful would it be to trace the whole circle of morals thus growing out of a few elementary principles of goſpel truth.

All Seneca's arguments againſt the fear of death never yet reconciled one reader to its approach, half ſo effectually as the humble believer is reconciled to it by that ſimple perſuaſion, "I know that my Re- "deemer liveth."

While the modern philoſopher is extending the boundaries of human knowledge, by undertaking to prove that matter is eternal; or enlarging the ſtock of human happineſs, by demonſtrating the extinction

of

of ſpirit,—it can do no harm to an unlettered man to believe, that "heaven and "earth ſhall paſs away, but God's word "ſhall not paſs away." While the former is indulging the profitable enquiry why the Deity made the world ſo late, or why he made it at all, it will not hurt the latter to believe that "in the beginning God made "the world," and that in the end "he "ſhall judge it in righteouſneſs."

While the liberal ſcholar is uſefully ſtudying the law of nature and of nations, let him rejoice that his more illiterate brother poſſeſſes the plain conviction that "love "is the fulfilling of the law"—that "love "working no ill to his neighbour." And let him be perſuaded that he himſelf, though he know all Tully's offices by heart, may not have acquired a more feeling and operative ſentiment than is conveyed to the *common* Chriſtian in the rule to "bear each other's "burthens." While the wit is criticiſing the creed, he will be no loſer by encouraging his dependents to keep the commandments; ſince

a few ſuch ſimple propoſitions as the above furniſh a more practical and correct rule of life than can be gleaned from all the volumes of ancient philoſophy, juſtly eminent as many of them are for wiſdom and purity. For though they abound with paſſages of true ſublimity, and ſentiments of great moral beauty, yet the reſult is naturally defective, the concluſions neceſſarily contradictory. This was no fault of the author, but of the ſyſtem. The viſion was acute, but the light was dim. The ſharpeſt ſagacity could not diſtinguiſh ſpiritual objects, in the twilight of natural religion, with that accuracy with which they are now diſcerned by every common Chriſtian, in the diffuſion of goſpel light.

And whether it be that what depraves the principle darkens the intellect alſo, certain it is that an uneducated ſerious Chriſtian reads his bible with a clearneſs of intelligence, with an intellectual comment, which no ſceptic or mere worldling ever attains. The former has not prejudged the cauſe he is

is examining. He is not often led by his paſſions, ſtill more rarely by his intereſt, to reſiſt his convictions. While " the ſecret " of the Lord is (obviouſly) with them that " fear him," the mind of them who fear him *not*, is generally prejudiced by a retaining fee from the world, from their paſſions or their pride, before they enter on the enquiry.

With what conſiſtency can the covetous man embrace a religion which ſo pointedly forbids him to lay up "treaſures upon earth?" How will the man of ſpirit, as the world is pleaſed to call the duelliſt, reliſh a religion which allows not " the ſun to go down " upon his wrath ?" How can the ambitious ſtruggle for " a kingdom which is " not of this world," and embrace a faith which commands him to lay dowh his crown at the feet of another ? How ſhould the profeſſed wit or the mere philoſopher adopt a ſyſtem which demands in a lofty tone of deriſion, " Where is the ſcribe? " Where is the wiſe ? Where is the diſputer

"of this world?" How will the self-satisfied Pharisee endure a religion which, while it peremptorily demands from him every useful action, and every right exertion, will not permit him to rest his hope of salvation on their performance? He whose affections are voluntarily rivetted to the present world, will not much delight in a scheme whose avowed principle is to set him above it.— The obvious consequence of these "hard "sayings" is illustrated by daily instances. "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" is a question not confined to the first age of his appearance. Had the most enlightened philosophers of the most polished nations, collected all the scattered wit and learning of the world into one point in order to invent a religion for the salvation of mankind, the doctrine of the cross is perhaps precisely the thing they would never have hit upon; precisely the thing which, being offered to them, they would reject. The intellectual pride of the philosopher relished it as little as the carnal pride of the Jew; for

for it flattered human wit no more than it gratified human grandeur. The pride of great acquirements, and of great wealth, equally obſtructs the reception of divine truth into the heart; and whether the natural man be called upon to part either from "great poſſeſſions," or "high imaginations," he equally goes away ſorrowing.

CHAP. V.

The negligent Conduct of Chriſtians no real Objection againſt Chriſtianity.—The reaſon why its Effects are not more manifeſt to Worldly Men, is, becauſe Believers do not lead Chriſtian Lives.—Profeſſors differ but little in their Practice from Unbelievers.—Even real Chriſtians are too diffident and timid, and afraid of acting up to their Principles.—The Abſurdity of the Charge commonly brought againſt religious People, that they are too ſtrict.

It is an objection frequently brought againſt Chriſtianity, that if it exhibited ſo perfect a ſcheme, if its influences were as ſtrong, if its effects were as powerful, as its friends pretend, it muſt have produced more viſible conſequences in the reformation of mankind. This is not the place fully to anſwer this objection,

objection, which (like all the other cavils against our religion) continues to be urged just as if it never *had* been answered.

That vice and immorality prevail in no small degree in countries professing Christianity, we need not go out of our own to be convinced. But that this is the case only because this benign principle is not suffered to operate in its full power, will be no less obvious to all who are sincere in their enquiries: For if we allow (and who that examines impartially can help allowing?) that it is the natural tendency of Christianity to make men better, then it must be the aversion from receiving it, and not the fault of the principle, which prevents them from becoming so.

Those who are acquainted with the effects which Christianity actually produced in the first ages of the church, when it *was* received in its genuine purity, and when it *did* operate without obstruction, from its professors at least, will want no other proof of its inherent power and efficacy. At that

period, its moſt decided and induſtrious enemy, the emperor Julian, could recommend the *manners* of the Galileans to the imitation of his pagan high prieſt; though he himſelf, at the ſame time, was doing every thing which the moſt inveterate malice, ſharpened by the acuteſt wit, and backed by the moſt abſolute power, could deviſe, to diſcredit their doctrines.

Nor would the efficacy of Chriſtianity be leſs viſible now in influencing the conduct of its profeſſors, if its principles were heartily and ſincerely received. They would, were they of the true genuine caſt, operate on the conduct ſo effectually, that we ſhould ſee morals and manners growing out of principles, as we ſee other conſequences grow out of their proper and natural cauſes. Let but this great ſpring have its unobſtructed play, and there would be little occaſion to declaim againſt this exceſs, or that enormity. If the ſame ſkill and care which are employed in curing ſymptoms, were vigorouſly levelled at the internal

nal principle of the diſeaſe, the moral health would feel the benefit. If that attention which is beſtowed in lopping the redundant and unſightly branches, were devoted to the cultivation of a ſound and uncorrupt root, the effect of this labour would ſoon be diſcovered by the excellence of the fruits.

For though, even in the higheſt poſſible exertion of religious principle, and the moſt diligent practice of all its conſequential train of virtues, man would ſtill find evil propenſities enough, in his fallen nature, to make it neceſſary that he ſhould counteract them, by keeping alive his diligence after higher attainments, and to quicken his aſpirations after a better ſtate; yet the prevailing temper would be in general right, the will would be in a great meaſure rectified; and the heart, feeling and acknowledging its diſeaſe, would apply itſelf diligently to the only remedy. Thus though even the beſt men have infirmities enough to deplore, commit ſins enough to keep them deeply

humble, and feel more ſenſibly than others the imperfections of that veſſel in which their heavenly treaſure is hid, they however have the internal conſolation of knowing that they ſhall have to do with a merciful Father, who "deſpiſeth not the ſighing of "the contrite heart, nor the deſire of ſuch "as be ſorrowful;" who has been witneſs to all their ſtruggles againſt ſin, and to whom they can appeal with Peter for the ſincerity of their deſires—"Lord! Thou "knoweſt all things. Thou knoweſt that "I love Thee."

All the heavy charges which have been brought againſt religion, have been taken from the abuſes of it. In every other inſtance, the injuſtice of this proceeding would be notorious: but there is a general want of candour in the judgment of men on this ſubject, which we do not find them exerciſe on other occaſions; that of throwing the fault of the erring or ignorant profeſſor on the profeſſion itſelf.

It does not derogate from the honourable profeſſion of arms, that there are cowards and braggarts in the army. If any man loſe his eſtate by the chicanery of an attorney, or his health by the blunder of a phyſician, it is commonly ſaid that the one was a diſgrace to his buſineſs, and the other was ignorant of it; but no one therefore concludes that law and phyſic are contemptible profeſſions.

Chriſtianity alone is obliged to bear all the obloquy incurred by the miſconduct of its followers; to ſuſtain all the reproach excited by ignorant, by fanatical, by ſuperſtitious, or hypocritical profeſſors. But whoever accuſes it of a tendency to produce the errors of theſe profeſſors, muſt have picked up his opinion any where rather than in the New Teſtament; which Book being the only authentic hiſtory of Chriſtianity, is that which candour would naturally conſult for information.

But as worldly and irreligious men do not draw their notions from that pure fountain,

tain, but from the polluted ſtream of human practice; as they form their judgment of divine truth from the conduct of thoſe who pretend to be enlightened by it; ſome charitable allowance *muſt* be made for the contempt which they entertain for Chriſtianity, when they ſee what poor effects it produces in the lives of the generality of profeſſing Chriſtians. What do they obſerve there which can lead them to entertain very high ideas of the principles which give birth to ſuch practices?

Do men of the world diſcover any marked, any decided difference between the conduct of nominal chriſtians and that of the reſt of their neighbours, who pretend to no religion at all? Do they ſee, in the daily lives of ſuch, any great abundance of thoſe fruits by which they have heard believers are to be known? On the contrary, do they not diſcern in them the ſame anxious and unwearied purſuit after the things of earth, as in thoſe who do not profeſs to have any thought of heaven? Do

not

not they ſee them labour as ſedulouſly in the intereſts of a debaſing and frivolous diſſipation, as thoſe who do not pretend to have any nobler object in view? Is there not the ſame eagerneſs to plunge into all ſorts of follies themſelves, and the ſame unrighteous ſpeed in introducing their children to them, as if they had never entered into a ſolemn engagement to renounce them? Is there not the ſame ſelf-indulgence, the ſame luxury, and the ſame paſſionate attachment to the things of this world in *them*, as is viſible in thoſe who do not look for another?*

Do not thoughtleſs neglect, and habitual diſſipation anſwer, as to ſociety, all the ends of the moſt decided infidelity? Between the barely decent and the openly profane there is indeed this difference,—That the one, by making no profeſſion, deceives neither the world nor his own heart; while the other, by intrenching himſelf in forms, fancies that he does ſomething, and thanks God that "he is not like this publican." The one only

only ſhuts his eyes upon the danger which the other deſpiſes.

But theſe unfruitful profeſſors would do well to recollect that, by a conduct ſo little worthy of their high calling, they not only violate the law to which they have vowed obedience, but occaſion many to diſbelieve or to deſpiſe it; that they are thus in a great meaſure accountable for the infidelity of others, and of courſe will have to anſwer for more than their own perſonal offences: For did they in any reſpect live up to the principles they profeſs; did they adorn the doctrines of Chriſtianity by a life in any degree conſonant to their faith; did they exhibit any thing of the "beauty of holineſs" in their daily converſation; they would then give ſuch a demonſtrative proof, not only of the ſincerity of their own obedience, but of the brightneſs of that divine light by which they profeſs to walk, that the moſt determined unbeliever would at laſt begin to think there muſt be *ſomething* in a religion of which the effects were ſo viſible,

and

and the fruits ſo amiable; and might in time be led to "glorify," not *them*, not the imperfect doers of theſe works, but "their "Father which is in heaven." Whereas, as things are at preſent carried on, the obvious concluſion muſt be, either that Chriſtians do not believe in the religion they profeſs, or that there is no truth in the religion itſelf.

For will he not naturally ſay, that if its influences were ſo predominant, its conſequences muſt be more evident? that, if the prize held out were really ſo bright, thoſe who truly believed ſo, would ſurely *do* ſomething, and *ſacrifice* ſomething to obtain it?

This effect of the careleſs conduct of believers on the hearts of others, will probably be a heavy aggravation of their own guilt at the final reckoning:—and there is no negligent Chriſtian can gueſs where the infection of his example may ſtop; or how remotely it may be pleaded as a palliation of the ſins of others, who either may think

themſelves ſafe while they are only doing what Chriſtians allow themſelves to do; or who may adduce a Chriſtian's habitual violation of the divine law, as a preſumptive evidence that there is no truth in Chriſtianity.

This ſwells the amount of the actual miſchief beyond calculation; and there is ſomething terrible in the idea of this ſort of indefinite evil, that the careleſs Chriſtian can never know the extent of the contagion he ſpreads, nor the multiplied infection which *they* may communicate in *their* turn, whom *his* diſorders firſt corrupted.

And there is this farther aggravation of his offence, that he will not only be anſwerable for all the poſitive evil of which his example is the cauſe; but for the omiſſion of all the probable good which might have been called forth in others, had *his* actions been conſiſtent with his profeſſion. What a ſtrong, what an almoſt irreſiſtible conviction would it carry to the hearts of unbelievers, if they beheld that characteriſtic difference in the manners of Chriſtians,

which

which their profeſſion gives one a right to expect, if they ſaw that diſintereſtedneſs, that humility, ſober-mindedneſs, temperance, ſimplicity, and ſincerity, which are the unavoidable fruits of a genuine faith! and which the Bible has taught them to expect in every Chriſtian.

But, while a man talks like a ſaint, and yet lives like a ſinner; while he profeſſes to believe like an apoſtle, and yet leads the life of a ſenſualiſt; talks of an ardent faith, and yet exhibits a cold and low practice; boaſts himſelf the diſciple of a meek Maſter, and yet is as much a ſlave to his paſſions as they who acknowledge no ſuch authority; while he appears the proud profeſſor of an humble religion, or the intemperate champion of a ſelf-denying one,—ſuch a man brings Chriſtianity into diſrepute, confirms thoſe in error who might have been awakened to conviction, ſtrengthens doubt into diſbelief, and hardens indifference into contempt.

Even among thofe of a better caft and a purer principle, the exceffive reftraints of timidity, caution, and that "fear of man, "which bringeth a fnare," confine, and almoft ftifle the generous fpirit of an ardent exertion in the caufe of religion. Chriftianity may pathetically expoftulate, that it is not always "an open enemy which dif-"honours her," but her "familiar friend." And, "what doft thou more than others?" is a queftion which even the good and worthy fhould often afk themfelves, in order to quicken their zeal; to prevent the total ftagnation of unexerted principles, on the the one hand; or the danger, on the other, of their being driven down the gulph of ruin by the unrefifted and confluent tides of temptation, fafhion, and example.

In a very ftrict and mortified age, of which a fcrupulous feverity was the predominant character, precautions againft an exceffive zeal might, and doubtlefs would, be a wholefome and prudent meafure. But in

in theſe times of relaxed principle and frigid indifference, to ſee people ſo vigilantly on their guard againſt the imaginary miſchiefs of enthuſiaſm, while they run headlong into the real oppoſite perils of a deſtructive licentiouſneſs, reminds us of the one-eyed animal in the fable; who, living on the banks of the ocean, never fancied he could be deſtroyed any way but by drowning: but, while he kept that one eye conſtantly fixed on the ſea, on which ſide he conclud-ed all the peril lay, he was devoured by an enemy on the dry land, from which quarter he never ſuſpected any danger.

Are not the miſchiefs of an enthuſiaſtic piety inſiſted on with as much earneſtneſs as if an extravagant devotion were the pre-vailing propenſity? Is not the neceſſity of moderation as vehemently urged as if an intemperate zeal were the epidemic diſ-temper of the great world? as if all our ap-parent danger and natural bias lay on the ſide of a too rigid auſterity, which required the diſcreet and conſtant counteraction of

an oppoſite principle? Would not a ſtranger be almoſt tempted to imagine, from the frequent invectives againſt extreme ſtrictneſs, that abſtraction from the world, and a monaſtic rage for retreat, were the ruling temper? that we were in ſome danger of ſeeing our places of diverſion abandoned, and the enthuſiaſtic ſcenes of the *Holy Fathers of the deſart* acted over again by the frantic and uncontroulable devotion of our young perſons of faſhion?

It is not to be denied, that enthuſiaſm is an evil to which the more religious of the lower claſs are peculiarly expoſed; and this from a variety of cauſes, upon which this is not the place to enlarge. But who will be hardy enough to aſſert that the claſs we are now addreſſing, commonly fall into the ſame error. In order to eſtabliſh, or to overthrow this aſſertion, let each faſhionable reader confeſs whether, within the ſphere of his own obſervation, the fact be realized. Let each bring this vague charge ſpecifically home to his own acquaintance. Let him honeſtly

honeſtly declare what proportion of noble enthuſiaſts, what number of honourable fanatics his own perſonal knowledge of the great world ſupplies. Let him compare the liſt of his enthuſiaſtic with that of his luxurious friends, of his fanatical with his irreligious acquaintance, of "the righteous "over much" with ſuch as "care for none "of theſe things;" of the ſtrict and preciſe with that of the looſe and irregular, of thoſe who beggar themſelves by their pious alms with thoſe who injure their fortune by extravagance; of thoſe who "are lovers of "God" with thoſe who are lovers of pleaſure. Let him declare whether he ſees more of his aſſociates ſwallowed up in gloomy meditation or immerſed in ſenſuality; whether more are the ſlaves of ſuperſtitious obſervances or of ambition.—Surely thoſe who addreſs the rich and great in the way of exhortation and reproof, would do particularly well to define exactly what is indeed the prevailing character; leſt, for want of ſuch diſcrimination they ſhould

heighten the diſeaſe they might wiſh to cure, and increaſe the bias they would deſire to counteract, by addreſſing to the voluptuary cautions which belong to the hermit, and thus aggravate his already inflamed appetites by invectives againſt an evil of which he is in little danger.

If, however, ſuperſtition, where it really does exiſt, injures religion, and we grant that it greatly injures it, yet we inſiſt that ſcepticiſm injures it no leſs; for to deride, or to omit any of the component parts of Chriſtian faith, is ſurely not a leſs fatal evil than making uncommanded additions to it.

It is ſeriouſly to be regretted in an age like the preſent, remarkable for indifference in religion and levity in manners, and which ſtands ſo much in need of lively patterns of firm and reſolute piety, that many who really are Chriſtians on the ſobereſt conviction, ſhould not appear more openly and decidedly on the ſide they have eſpouſed; that they aſſimilate ſo very much with

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the manners of thoſe about them (which manners they yet ſcruple not to diſapprove); and, inſtead of an avowed but prudent ſtedfaſtneſs, which might draw over the others, appear evidently fearful of being thought preciſe and over-ſcrupulous; and actually ſeem to diſavow their right principles, by conceſſions and accommodations not ſtrictly conſiſtent with them. They often ſeem cautiouſly afraid of *doing too much*, and *going too far*; and the dangerous plea, the neceſſity of *living like other people*, of *being like the reſt of the world*, and the propriety of *not being particular*, is brought as a reaſonable apology for a too yielding and indiſcriminate conformity.

But, at a time when almoſt all are ſinking into the prevailing corruption, how beautiful a rare, a ſingle integrity is, let the inſtances of Lot and Noah declare! And to thoſe with whom a poem is an higher authority than the Bible, let me recommend the moſt animated picture of a

righteous ſingularity that ever was delineated, in

——The Seraph Abdiel, faithful found
Among the faithleſs, faithful only he
Among innumerable falſe, unmov'd,
Unſhaken, unſeduc'd, unterrify'd,
His loyalty he kept, his love and zeal:
Nor NUMBERS, nor EXAMPLE with him wrought
To ſwerve from truth, or change his conſtant mind,
Tho' SINGLE. PAR. LOST, B. iv.

Few indeed of the more orderly and decent have any objection to that degree of religion which is compatible with their general acceptance with others, or the full enjoyment of their own pleaſures. For a formal and ceremonious exerciſe of the outward duties of Chriſtianity may not only be kept up without exciting cenſure, but will even procure a certain reſpect and confidence; and is not quite irreconcileable with a voluptuous and diſſipated life. So far many go; and ſo far as "godlineſs is "pro-

"profitable to the life that *is*," it paſſes without reproach.

But as ſoon as men begin to conſider religious exerciſes not as a decency, but a duty; not as a commutation for a ſelf-denying life, but as a means to promote a holy temper and a virtuous conduct; as ſoon as they feel diſpoſed to carry the effect of their devotion into their daily life; as ſoon as their principles diſcover themſelves, by leading them to withdraw from thoſe ſcenes, and abſtain from thoſe actions in which the gay place their ſupreme happineſs; as ſoon as ſomething is to be *done*, and ſomething is to be *parted with*, then the world begins to take offence, and to ſtigmatize the *activity* of that piety which had been commended as long as it remained *inoperative*, and had only evaporated in *words*.

When religion, like the vital principle, takes its ſeat in the heart, and ſends out ſupplies of life and heat to every part; diffuſes motion, ſoul, and vigour, through

the whole circulation, and informs and animates the whole man; when it operates on the practice, influences the conversation, breaks out into a lively zeal for the honour of God, and the best interests of mankind, then the sincerity of heart or the sanity of mind, of that person will become questionable; and it must be owing to a very fortunate combination of circumstances indeed, if he can at once preserve the character of parts and piety, and retain the reputation of a man of sense after he has acquired that of a Christian.

It is surely a folly to talk of being too holy, too strict, or too good. Where there really happens to appear some foundation for the charge of enthusiasm, (as there are indeed sometimes in good people eccentricities which justify the censure,) we may depend upon it, that it proceeds from some defect in the judgment, and not from any excess in the piety: for in goodness there is no excess: and it is as preposterous to say that any one is too good, or too pious,

pious, as that he is too wife, too ftrong, or too healthy; fince the higheft point in all thefe is only the perfection of that quality which we admired in a lower degree. There may be an *imprudent*, but there cannot be a *fuperabundant* goodnefs. An ardent imagination may miflead a rightly turned heart; and a weak intellect may incline the beft intentioned to afcribe too much value to things of comparatively fmall importance. Such a one not having difcernment enough to perceive where the force and ftrefs of duty lie, may inadvertently difcredit religion by a too fcrupulous exactnefs in points of fmall intrinfic value. And even well-meaning men as well as hypocrites may think they have done a meritorious fervice when their "mint" and "anife" are rigoroufly tithed.

But in obferving the "weightier matters "of the law," in the practice of univerfal holinefs, in the love of God, there can be no poffibility of exceeding, while there is no limitation in the command. We are in

no danger of loving our neighbour *better* than ourselves; and let us remember that we do not go beyond, but fall ſhort of our duty, while we love him *leſs*. If we were commanded to love God with *ſome* of our heart, with *part* of our ſoul, and a *portion* of our ſtrength, there would then be ſome colour for thoſe perpetual cavils about the *proportion* of love and the *degree* of obedience which are due to him. But as the command is ſo definite, ſo abſolute, ſo comprehenſive, ſo entire, nothing can be more abſurd than that unmeaning, but not unfrequent charge, brought againſt religious perſons, that *they are too ſtrict*. It is in effect ſaying, that they love God too much, and ſerve him too well.

The foundation of this ſilly cenſure is commonly laid in the firſt principles of education, where an early ſeparation is ſyſtematically made between duty and pleaſure. One of the firſt baits held out for the encouragement of children is, that when they have done their *duty*, they will be entitled

titled to ſome *pleaſure;* thus forcibly diſjoining what ſhould be conſidered as inſeparable. And there is not a more common juſtification of that idle and diſſipated manner in which the ſecond half of the Sunday is commonly ſpent, even by thoſe who make a conſcience of ſpending the former part properly, than that, "now they have "done their duty, they may take their plea-"ſure."

But while Chriſtian obſervances are conſidered as taſks, which are to be got over to entitle us to ſomething more pleaſant; as a burthen which we muſt endure in order to propitiate an inexorable Judge, who makes a hard bargain with his creatures, and allows them juſt ſo much amuſement in pay for ſo much drudgery,—we muſt not wonder that ſuch low views are entertained of Chriſtianity, and that a religious life is reprobated as ſtrict and rigid.

But to him who acts from the nobler motive of love, and the animating power of the Chriſtian hope, the exerciſe is the reward,

ward, the permiſſion is the privilege, the work is the wages. *He* does not carve out ſome miſerable pleaſure, and ſtipulate for ſome meagre diverſion, to pay himſelf for the hard performance of his duty, who in that very performance experiences the higheſt pleaſure; and feels the trueſt gratification of which his nature is capable, in devoting the nobleſt part of that nature to *His* ſervice, to whom he owes all, becauſe from Him he has received all.

This reprobated ſtrictneſs, therefore, ſo far from being the ſource of diſcomfort and miſery, as is pretended, is in reality the true cauſe of actual enjoyment, by laying the axe to the root of all thoſe turbulent and uneaſy paſſions, the unreſerved and yet imperfect gratification of which does ſo much more tend to diſturb our happineſs, than that ſelf-government which Chriſtianity enjoins.

But all precepts ſeem rigorous, all obſervances are really hard, where there is not an entire conviction of God's right to our

obedience, and an internal principle of faith and love to make that obedience pleaſant. A religious life is indeed a hard bondage to one immerſed in the practices of the world, and under the dominion of its appetites and paſſions. To a real Chriſtian, it is "perfect freedom." He does not now abſtain from ſuch and ſuch things, merely becauſe they are forbidden, (as he did in the firſt ſtages of his progreſs,) but becauſe his ſoul has no longer any pleaſure in them. And it would be the ſevereſt of all puniſhments to oblige him to return to thoſe practices, from which he once abſtained with difficulty, and through the leſs noble principle of fear.

There is not therefore perhaps a greater miſtake than that common notion entertained by the more orderly part of the faſhionable world, that a little religion will make people happy, but that an high degree of it is incompatible with all enjoyment. For ſurely *that* religion can add little to a man's happineſs which reſtrains him

him from the commiſſion of a wrong action, but which does not pretend to extinguiſh the bad principle from which the act proceeded. A religion which ties the hands, without changing the heart; which, like the hell of Tantalus, ſubdues not the deſire, yet forbids the gratification, is indeed an uncomfortable religion: and ſuch a religion, though it may gain a man ſomething on the ſide of reputation, will give him but little inward comfort. For what true peace can that heart enjoy which is left a prey to that temper which produced the evil, even though terror or ſhame may have prevented the outward act.

That people devoted to the purſuits of a diſſipated life ſhould conceive of religion as a difficult and even unattainable ſtate, it is eaſy to believe. That they ſhould conceive of it as an unhappy ſtate, is the conſummation of their error and their ignorance: for that a *rational* being ſhould have his underſtanding enlightened; that an *immortal* being ſhould have his views extended and

enlarged;

enlarged; that a *helpleſs* being ſhould have a conſciouſneſs of aſſiſtance, a *ſinful* being the proſpect of pardon, or a *fallen* one the aſſurance of reſtoration, does not ſeem a probable ground of unhappineſs: and on any other ſubject but religion ſuch reaſoning would not be admiſſible.

CHAP. VI.

A Stranger, from obſerving the faſhionable Mode of Life, would not take this to be a Chriſtian Country.—Lives of Profeſſing Chriſtians examined, by a Compariſon with the Goſpel.—Chriſtianity not made the Rule of Life, even by thoſe who profeſs to receive it as an Object of Faith.—Temporizing Writers contribute to lower the Credit of Chriſtianity.—Looſe Harangues on Morals not calculated to reform the Heart.

The Chriſtian religion is not intended, as ſome of its faſhionable profeſſors ſeem to fancy, to operate as a charm, a taliſman, or incantation, and to produce its effect by our pronouncing certain myſtical words, attending at certain conſecrated places, and performing certain hallowed ceremonies; but it is an active, vital, influential prin-

ciple, operating on the heart, reſtraining the deſires, affecting the general conduct, and as much regulating our commerce with the world, our buſineſs, pleaſures, and enjoyments, our converſations, deſigns, and actions, as our behaviour in public worſhip, or even in private devotion.

That the effects of ſuch a principle are ſtrikingly viſible in the lives and manners of the generality of thoſe who give the law to faſhion, will not perhaps be inſiſted on. And indeed the whole preſent ſyſtem of faſhionable life is utterly deſtructive of ſerioufneſs. To inſtance only in the growing habit of frequenting great aſſemblies, which is generally thought inſignificant, and is in effect ſo vapid, that one almoſt wonders how it can be dangerous;—it would excite laughter, becauſe we are ſo broken into the habit, were I to inſiſt on the immorality of paſſing one's whole life in a crowd.—But thoſe promiſcuous myriads which compoſe the ſociety, falſely ſo called, of the gay world; who are brought together without

eſteem, remain without pleaſure, and part without regret; who live in a round of diverſions, the poſſeſſion of which is ſo joyleſs, though the abſence is ſo inſupportable; theſe, by the mere force of inceſſant and indiſcriminate aſſociation, weaken, and in time wear out, the beſt feelings and affections of the human heart. And the mere ſpirit of diſſipation, thus contracted from invariable habit, even detached from all its concomitant evils, is in itſelf as hoſtile to a religious ſpirit as more poſitive and actual offences. Far be it from me to ſay that it is as criminal; I only inſiſt that it is as oppoſite to that heavenly-mindedneſs which is the eſſence of the Chriſtian temper.

Let us ſuppoſe an ignorant and unprejudiced ſpectator, who ſhould have been taught the theory of all the religions on the globe, brought hither from the other hemiſphere. Set him down in the politeſt part of our capital, and let him determine, if he can, except from what he ſhall ſee interwoven in the texture of our

laws,

laws, and kept up in the ſervice of our churches, to what particular religion we belong. Let him not mix entirely with the moſt flagitious, but only with the moſt faſhionable; at leaſt, let him keep what they themſelves call *the beſt company*. Let him ſcrutinize into the manners, cuſtoms, converſations, habits, and diverſions, moſt in vogue, and then infer from all he has ſeen and heard, what is the eſtabliſhed religion of the land.

That it could not be the Jewiſh he would ſoon diſcover; for of rites, ceremonies, and external obſervances, he would trace but ſlender remains. He would be equally convinced that it could not be the religion of Old Greece and Rome; for that enjoined reverence to the gods, and inculcated obedience to the laws. His moſt probable concluſion would be in favour of the Mahometan faith, did not the exceſſive indulgence of ſome of the moſt diſtinguiſhed, in an article of intemperance prohibited even by the

the ſenſual Prophet of Arabia, defeat that conjecture.

How would the petrified inquirer be aſtoniſhed, if he were told that all theſe gay, thoughtleſs, luxurious, diſſipated perſons, profeſſed a religion meek, ſpiritual, ſelf-denying; of which humility, poverty of ſpirit, a renewed mind, and nonconformity to the world, were ſpecific diſtinctions!

When he ſaw the ſons of men of fortune, ſcarcely old enough to be ſent to ſchool, admitted to be ſpectators of the turbulent and unnatural diverſions of racing and gaming; and the almoſt infant-daughters, even of wiſe and virtuous mothers (an innovation which faſhion herſelf forbade till now) carried with moſt unthrifty anticipation to the frequent and late protracted ball,—would he believe that we were of a religion which has required from theſe very parents, a ſolemn vow that theſe children ſhould be bred up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" That they ſhould

ſhould conſtantly "believe God's holy "word, and keep his commandments?"

When he obſerved the turmoils of ambition, the competitions of vanity, the ardent thirſt for the poſſeſſion of wealth, and the wild miſapplication of it when poſſeſſed; how could he perſuade himſelf that all theſe anxious purſuers of preſent enjoyment were the diſciples of a Maſter who exhibited the very character and eſſence of his religion, as it were in a motto—"MY KINGDOM IS "NOT OF THIS WORLD?"

When he beheld thoſe nocturnal clubs, ſo ſubverſive of private virtue and domeſtic happineſs, would he conceive that we were of a religion which in expreſs terms "exhorts young men to be ſober-minded?"

When he ſaw thoſe magnificent and brightly illuminated ſtructures which decorate and diſgrace the very precincts of the royal reſidence (ſo free itſelf from all theſe pollutions); when he beheld the nightly offerings made to the demon of play, on whoſe cruel altar the fortune and

happineſs of wives and children are offered up without remorſe; would he not conclude that we were of ſome of thoſe barbarous religions which enjoin unnatural ſacrifices, and whoſe horrid deities are appeaſed with nothing leſs than human victims?

Now ought we not to pardon our imaginary ſpectator, if he ſhould not at once conclude that all the various deſcriptions of perſons above noticed profeſſed the Chriſtian religion; ſuppoſing him to have no other way of determining but by the conformity of their manners to that rule by which he had undertaken to judge them? We indeed ourſelves muſt judge with a certain latitude, and candidly take the preſent ſtate of ſociety into the account; which, in ſome few inſtances perhaps, muſt be allowed to diſpenſe with that literal ſtrictneſs, which more peculiarly belonged to the firſt ages of the Goſpel.

But as this is really a Chriſtian country, profeſſing to enjoy the pureſt faith in the pureſt form, it cannot be unreaſonable to

go a little farther, and inquire whether Chriſtianity, however firmly eſtabliſhed, and generally profeſſed in it, is really practiſed by that order of faſhionable perſons, who, while they are abſorbed in the delights of the world, and their whole ſouls devoted to the purſuit of pleaſure, yet ſtill arrogate to themſelves the honourable name of Chriſtians, and occaſionally teſtify their claim to this high character, by a general profeſſion of their belief in, and a decent occaſional compliance with the forms of religion, and the ordinances of our church?

This inquiry muſt be made, not by a compariſon with the ſtate of Chriſtianity in other countries; (a mode always fallacious, whether adopted by nations or individuals, is that of comparing themſelves with thoſe who are ſtill worſe); nor muſt it be made from any notions drawn from cuſtom, decency, or any other human ſtandard; but from a ſcripture view of what real religion is;—from any one of thoſe ſtriking and comprehenſive repreſentations of it, which

may

may be found condenſed in ſo many ſingle paſſages of the ſacred writings.

Whoever then looks into the Book of God, and obſerves its prevailing ſpirit, and then looks into that part of the world under conſideration, will not ſurely be thought very cenſorious, if he pronounce that the conformity between them does not ſeem to be *very* ſtriking; and that the manners of the one do not very evidently appear to be dictated by the ſpirit of the other. Will he diſcover that the Chriſtian religion is ſo much as pretended to be made the *rule of life* even by that decent order who profeſs not to have diſcarded it as an object of faith? Do even the more regular, who neglect not public obſervances, conſider Chriſtianity as *the meaſure of their actions?* Do even what the world calls religious perſons employ their time, their abilities, and their fortune, as talents for which they however confeſs they believe themſelves accountable; or do they in any reſpect live, I will not ſay up to their profeſſion (for what human being does ſo?) but

but in any consistency with it, or even with an eye to its predominant tendencies? Do persons in general of this description seem to consider the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel as any thing more than a form of words, necessary indeed to be repeated, and proper to be believed? But do they consider them as necessary to be adopted into a governing principle of action?

Is it acting a consistent part to declare in the solemn assemblies that they are "miser-"able offenders," and that "there is no "health in them," and yet never in their daily lives to discover any symptom of that humility and self-abasement, which should naturally be implied in such a declaration?

Is it reasonable or compatible, I will not say with piety, but with good sense, earnestly to lament having "followed the devices and "desires of their own hearts," and then deliberately to plunge into such a torrent of dissipations as clearly indicates that they do not struggle to oppose *one* of these devices, to resist *one* of these desires? I dare

not

not ſay this is hypocriſy, I do not believe it is, but ſurely it is inconſiſtency.

"Be ye not conformed to this world," is a leading principle in the book they acknowledge as their guide. But after unreſiſtingly aſſenting to this as a doctrinal truth, at church,—how abſurd would they think any one who ſhould expect them to adopt it into their practice! Perhaps the whole law of God does not exhibit a ſingle precept more expreſsly, more ſteadily, and more uniformly rejected by the claſs in queſtion. If it mean any thing, it can hardly be conſiſtent with that mode of life emphatically diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of *faſhionable*.

Now, would it be much more abſurd (for any other reaſon but becauſe it is not the cuſtom) if our legiſlators were to meet one day in every week, gravely to read over all the obſolete ſtatutes and reſcinded acts of parliament, than it is for the order of perſons of the above deſcription to aſſemble every Sunday, to profeſs their belief

in

in and ſubmiſſion to a ſyſtem of principles, which they do not ſo much as *intend* ſhall be binding on their practice?

But to continue our inquiry.—There is not a more common or more intelligible definition of human duty, than that of "Fear "God, and keep his commandments." Now, as to the firſt of theſe inſeparable precepts, can we, with the utmoſt ſtretch of charity, be very forward to conclude that God is really "very greatly feared," in ſecret, by thoſe who give too manifeſt indications that they live "without him in "the world?" And as to the latter precept, which naturally grows out of the other—without noticing any of the flagrant breaches of the moral law, let us only confine ourſelves to the allowed, general, and notorious violation of the third and fourth commandments, by the higher as well as by the lower orders; breaches ſo flagrant, that they force themſelves on the obſervation of the moſt inattentive, too palpably to be either unnoticed or palliated.

Shall

Shall we have reason to change our opinion if we take that divine representation of the sum and substance of religion, and apply it as a touchstone in the present trial,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God "with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy mind, "and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy "strength, and thy neighbour as thyself?" Now, judging by inference, do we see many public proofs of that heavenly-mindedness which would be the inevitable effect of such a fervent and animated dedication of all the powers, faculties, and affections of the soul to him who gave it? And, as to the great rule of social duty expressed in the second clause, do we observe as much of that considerate kindness, that pure disinterestedness, that conscientious attention to the comfort of others, especially of dependents and inferiors, as might be expected from those who enjoy the privilege of so unerring a standard of conduct? a standard which, if impartially consulted, must make our kindness to others bear an exact proportion

portion to our ſelf-love: a rule in which Chriſtian principle, operating on human ſenſibility, could not fail to decide aright in every ſuppoſable caſe. For no man can doubt how he ought to act towards another, while the inward correſponding ſuggeſtions of conſcience and feeling concur in letting him know how he would wiſh, in a change of circumſtances, that others ſhould act towards him.

Or ſuppoſe we take a more detailed ſurvey, by a third rule, which indeed is not ſo much the principle as the effect of piety— "True religion, and undefiled before God "and the Father, is this: to viſit the "fatherleſs and widows in their affliction, "and to keep himſelf *unſpotted from the* "*world.*" Now, if Chriſtianity inſiſts that obedience to the latter injunction be the true evidence of the ſincerity of thoſe who fulfil the former, is the beneficence of the faſhionable world *very* ſtrikingly illuſtrated by this ſpotleſs purity, this exemption from the

the pollutions of the world, which is here declared to be its invariable concomitant?

But if I were to venture to take my eſtimate with a view more immediately evangelical; if I preſumed to look for that genuine Chriſtianity which conſiſts in "repentance towards God, and faith in our "Lord Jeſus Chriſt;" to inſiſt that, whatever *natural* religion and *faſhionable* religion may teach, it is the peculiarity of the *Chriſtian* religion to humble the ſinner and exalt the Saviour; to inſiſt that not only the groſsly flagitious, but that *all* have ſinned; that *all* are by nature in a ſtate of condemnation; that *all* ſtand in need of mercy, of which there is no hope but on the Goſpel terms; that eternal life is promiſed to thoſe *only* who accept it on the offered conditions of "faith, repentance, and re-"newed obedience;"—if I were to inſiſt on ſuch evidences of our Chriſtianity as theſe; if I were to expreſs theſe doctrines in plain ſcriptural terms, without lowering, qualifying,

qualifying, disguising, or doing them away; if I were to insist on this belief, and its implied and corresponding practices; I am aware that, with whatever condescending patience this little tract might have been so far perused, many a fashionable reader would here throw it aside, as having now detected the palpable enthusiast, the abettor of "strange doctrines," long ago consigned over by the liberal and the polite to bigots and fanatics. And yet, if the Bible be true, this is a simple and faithful description of Christianity.

Surely men forget that we are urging them upon their own principles; that while we are pressing them with motives drawn from Christianity, they seem to have as little concern in those motives as if they themselves were of another religion. It is not a name that will stand us in stead. It is not merely glorying in the title of Christians, while we are living in the neglect of its precepts; it is not valuing ourselves on the profession of religion as creditable,

while we reject the power of it as fanatical, that will ſave us. In any other circumſtance of life it would be accounted abſurd to have a ſet of propoſitions, principles, ſtatutes, or fundamental articles, and not to make them the ground of our acting as well as of our reaſoning. In theſe ſuppoſed inſtances the blame would lie in the contradiction; in religion it lies in the agreement. Strange! that to act in conſequence of received and acknowledged principles, ſhould be accounted weakneſs! Strange, that what alone is truly conſiſtent, ſhould be branded as abſurd! Strange, that men muſt really forbear to act rationally, only that they may not be reckoned mad! Strange, that they ſhould be commended for having prayed in the excellent words of the Bible and of our church, for "a clean "heart, and a right ſpirit;" and yet, if they gave any ſign of ſuch a transformation of heart, they ſhould be accounted, if not fanatical, at leaſt, ſingular, weak, or melancholy men.

After having, however, juſt ventured to hint at what are indeed the humbling doctrines of the goſpel, the doctrines to which alone eternal life is promiſed, I ſhall in deep humility forbear to enlarge on this part of the ſubject, which has been exhauſted by the labours of wiſe and pious men in all ages. Unhappily, however, the moſt awakening of theſe writers are not the favourite gueſts in the cloſets of the more faſhionable Chriſtians; who, when they happen to be more ſeriouſly diſpoſed than ordinary, are fond of finding out ſome middle kind of reading, which recommends ſome half-way ſtate, ſomething between Paganiſm and Chriſtianity, ſuſpending the mind, like the poſition of Mahomet's tomb, between earth and heaven:—a kind of reading which, while it quiets the conſcience by being on the ſide of morals, neither awakens fear, nor alarms ſecurity. By dealing in generals, it comes home to the hearts of none: it flatters the paſſions of the reader, by aſcribing high merit to the per-

performance of certain right actions, and the forbearance from certain wrong ones; among which, that reader muſt be very unlucky indeed who does not find ſome performances and ſome forbearances of his own. It at once enables him to keep heaven in his eye, and the world in his heart. It agreeably repreſents the readers to themſelves as amiable perſons, guilty indeed of a few faults, but never as condemned ſinners under ſentence of death. It commonly abounds with high encomiums on the dignity of human nature; the good effects of virtue on health, fortune, and reputation; the dangers of a blind zeal, the miſchiefs of enthuſiaſm, and the folly of ſingularity, with various other kindred ſentiments; which, if they do not fall in of themſelves with the corruptions of our nature, may, by a little warping, be eaſily accommodated to them.

Theſe are the too ſucceſsful practices of certain lukewarm and temporizing divines, who have become popular by blunting the edge

of

of that heavenly tempered weapon, whoſe ſalutary keenneſs, but for their "deceitful "handling," would oftener "pierce to the "dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit."

But thoſe ſeverer preachers of righteouſneſs, who diſguſt by applying too cloſely to the conſcience; who probe the inmoſt heart, and lay open all its latent peccancies; who treat of principles as the only certain ſource of manners; who lay the axe to the root, oftener than the pruning knife to the branch; who inſiſt much and often on the great leading truths, that man is a fallen creature, who muſt be reſtored, if he be reſtored at all, by means very little flattering to human pride,—ſuch heart-ſearching writers as theſe will ſeldom find acceſs to the houſes and hearts of the more modiſh Chriſtians, unleſs they happen to owe their admiſſion to ſome ſubordinate quality of ſtyle; unleſs they can captivate, with the ſeducing graces of language, thoſe well-bred readers, who are childiſhly amuſing themſelves with the garniſh, when they are

 periſhing

perishing for want of food; who are searching for polished periods when they should be in quest of alarming truths; who are looking for elegance of composition when they should be anxious for eternal life.

Whatever comparative praise may be due to the former class of writers, when viewed with others of a less decent order, yet I am not sure whether so many books of frigid morality, exhibiting such inferior motives of action, such moderate representations of duty, and such a low standard of principle, have not done religion much more harm than good; whether they do not lead many a reader to inquire what is the lowest degree in the scale of virtue with which he may content himself, so as barely to escape eternal punishment; how much indulgence he may allow himself, without absolutely forfeiting his chance of safety: what is the uttermost verge to which he may venture of this world's enjoyment, and yet just keep within a possibility of hope for the next: adjusting the scales of

indulgence

indulgence and ſecurity with ſuch a ſcrupulous equilibrium, as not to loſe much pleaſure, yet not incur much penalty.

This is hardly an exaggerated repreſentation: and to theſe low views of duty is partly owing ſo much of that bare-weight virtue with which even Chriſtians are ſo apt to content themſelves: fighting for every inch of ground which may poſſibly be taken within the pales of permiſſion, and ſtretching thoſe pales to the utmoſt edge of that limitation about which the world and the Bible contend.

But while the nominal Chriſtian is perſuading himſelf that there can be no harm in going *a little farther*, the real Chriſtian is always afraid of going too far. While the one is debating for a little more diſputed ground, the other is ſo fearful of ſtraying into the regions of unallowed indulgence, that he keeps at a prudent diſtance from the extremity of his permitted limits; and is as anxious in reſtricting as the other is deſirous of extending them. One thing is

 clear,

clear, and it may be no bad indication by which to diſcover the ſtate of a man's heart to himſelf; while he is contending for this allowance, and ſtipulating for the other indulgence, it will ſhew him that, whatever change there may be in his life, there is none in his heart; the temper remains as it did; and it is by the inward frame rather than the outward act that he can beſt judge of his *own* ſtate, whatever may be the rule by which he undertakes to judge of that of another.

It is leſs wonderful that there are not more Chriſtians, than that Chriſtians, as they are called, are not better men; for if Chriſtianity be not true, the motives to virtue are not high enough to quicken ordinary men to very extraordinary exertions. We ſee them do and ſuffer every day for popularity, for cuſtom, for faſhion, for the point of honour, not only more than good men do and ſuffer for religion, but a great deal more than religion requires them to do. For her *reaſonable ſervice* demands no

ſacrifices but what are ſanctioned by good ſenſe, ſound policy, right reaſon, and uncorrupt judgment.

Many of theſe faſhionable profeſſors even go ſo far as to bring their right faith as an apology for their wrong practice. They have a commodious way of intrenching themſelves within the ſhelter of ſome general poſition of unqueſtionable truth: Even the great Chriſtian hope becomes a ſnare to them. They apologize for a life of offence, by taking refuge in the ſupreme goodneſs they are abuſing. That "God is all merciful," is the common reply to thoſe who hint to them their danger. This is a falſe and fatal application of a divine and comfortable truth. Nothing can be more certain than the propoſition, nor more deluſive than the inference: for their deduction implies, not that he is merciful to ſin repented of, but to ſin continued in. But it is a moſt fallacious hope to expect that God will violate his own covenant, or that he is indeed, "all mercy," to the utter excluſion

of

of his other attributes of perfect holiness, purity, and justice.

It is a dangerous folly to rest on these vague and general notions of indefinite mercy; and nothing can be more delusive than this indefinite trust in being forgiven in our *own* way, after God has clearly revealed to us that he will only forgive us in *his* way. Besides, is there not something singularly base in sinning against God *because* he is merciful?

But the truth is, no one does truly trust in God, who does not endeavour to obey him. For to break his laws, and yet to depend on his favour; to live in opposition to his will, and yet in expectation of his mercy; to violate his commands, and yet look for his acceptance, would not, in any other instance, be thought a reasonable ground of conduct; and yet it is by no means as uncommon as it is inconsistent.

CHAP. VII.

View of thoſe who acknowledge Chriſtianity as a perfect Syſtem of Morals, but deny its Divine Authority.—Morality not the Whole of Religion.

As in the preceding chapter notice was taken of that deſcription of perſons who profeſs to receive Chriſtianity with great reverence as a matter of faith, who yet do not pretend to adopt it as a rule of conduct; I ſhall conclude theſe ſlight remarks with ſome ſhort animadverſions on another ſet of men, and that not a ſmall one, among the decent and the faſhionable, who profeſs to think it exhibits an admirable ſyſtem of morals, while they deny its divine authority; though that authority alone can make the neceſſity of obeying its precepts binding on the conſciences of men.

This

This is a very discreet scheme: for such persons at once save themselves from the discredit of having their understanding imposed upon by a supposed blind submission to evidences and authorities; and yet, prudently enough, secure to themselves, in no small degree, the reputation of good men. By steering this middle kind of course, they contrive to be reckoned liberal by the *philosophers*, and decent by the believers.

But we are not to expect to see the pure morality of the Gospel very carefully transfused into the lives of such objectors. And indeed it would be unjust to imagine that the precepts *should* be most scrupulously observed by those who reject the authority. The influence of divine truth must necessarily best prepare the heart for an unreserved obedience to its laws. If we do not depend on the offers of the Gospel, we shall want the best motive to the actions and performances which it enjoins. A lively belief *must* therefore precede a hearty obedience.

ence. Let thoſe who think otherwiſe hear what the Saviour of the World has ſaid: "For this end was I born, and for this "cauſe came I into the world, that I might "bear witneſs unto the truth." Thoſe who reject the Goſpel, therefore, reject the *power* of performing good actions. That command, for inſtance, to ſet "our affec-"tions on things above," will operate but faintly, till that ſpirit from which the command proceeds touches the heart, and convinces it that no human good is worthy of the entire affection of an immortal creature. An unreſerved faith in the promiſer *muſt* precede our acceptable performance of any duty to which the promiſe is annexed.

But as to a ſet of duties enforced by no other motive than a bare acquieſcence in their beauty, and a cold conviction of their propriety, but impelled by no obedience to his authority who impoſes them; though we know not how well they might be performed by pure and impeccable beings, yet we know how they commonly *are* per-

formed by frail and diſorderly creatures, fallen from their innocence, and corrupt in their very natures.

Nothing but a conviction of the truth of Chriſtianity can reconcile thinking beings to the extraordinary appearances of things in the Creator's moral government of the world. The works of God are an enigma, of which his word alone is the ſolution. The dark veil which is thrown over the divine diſpenſations in this lower world, muſt naturally ſhock thoſe who conſider only the ſingle ſcene which is acting on the preſent ſtage; but is reconcileable to him who, having learnt from revelation the nature of the laws by which the great Author acts, truſts confidently that the cataſtrophe will ſet all to rights. The confuſion which ſin and the paſſions have introduced; the triumph of wickedneſs; the ſeemingly arbitrary diſproportion of human conditions, accountable on no ſcheme but that which the Goſpel has opened to us—have all a natural tendency to withdraw from the

love

love of God the hearts of thoſe who erect themſelves into critics on the divine conduct, and yet will not ſtudy the plan, and get acquainted with the rules, ſo far as it has pleaſed the Supreme Diſpoſer to reveal them.

Till therefore the word of God is uſed as " a lamp to their paths," men can neither truly diſcern the crookedneſs of their own ways, nor the perfection of that light by which they are directed to walk. And this light can only be ſeen by its own proper brightneſs: it has no other medium. Until therefore " the ſecret of the Lord" is with men, they will not truly " fear him;" until he has " enlarged their hearts" with the knowledge and belief of his word, they will not very vigorouſly run " the way of his " commandments." Until they have acquired that " faith, without which it is im- " poſſible to pleaſe God," they will not attain that " holineſs, without which no man can " ſee him."

And indeed if God has thought fit to make the Gofpel an inftrument of falvation, we muft own the neceffity of receiving it as a divine inftitution, before it is likely to operate very effectually on the human conduct. The great Creator, if we may judge by analogy from natural things, is fo juft and wife an œconomift, that he always adapts, with the moft accurate precifion, the inftrument to the work; and never lavifhes more means than are neceffary to accomplifh the propofed end. If therefore Chriftianity had been intended for nothing more than a mere fyftem of ethics, fuch a fyftem furely might have been produced at an infinitely lefs expence. The long chain of prophecy, the fucceffion of miracles, the labours of apoftles, the blood of the faints, to fay nothing of the great and coftly facrifice which the Gofpel records, might furely have been fpared. Leffons of mere human virtue might have been delivered by fome fuitable inftrument of human wifdom, ftrengthened by

by the viſible authority of human power. A bare ſyſtem of morals might have been communicated to mankind with a more reaſonable proſpect of advantage, by means not ſo repugnant to human pride. A mere ſcheme of conduct might have been delivered with far greater probability of the ſucceſs of its reception by Antoninus the emperor, or Plato the philoſopher, than by Paul the tent-maker, or Peter the fiſherman.

Chriſtianity, then, muſt be embraced entirely, if it be received at all. It muſt be taken, without mutilation, as a perfect ſcheme, in the way in which God has been pleaſed to reveal it. It muſt be accepted, not as exhibiting beautiful parts, but as preſenting one conſummate whole, of which the perfection ariſes from coherence and dependence, from relation and conſiſtency. Its power will be weakened, and its energy deſtroyed, if every caviller pulls out a pin, or obſtructs a ſpring with the preſumptuous view of new modelling the divine work, and making it go to his own mind. There

 muſt

must be no breaking this system into portions of which we are at liberty to choose one and reject another. There is no separating the evidences from the doctrines, the doctrines from the precepts, belief from obedience, morality from piety, the love of our neighbour from the love of God. If we allow Christianity to be any thing, we must allow it to be every thing: if we allow the Divine Author to be indeed unto us "wisdom and righteousness," he must be also "sanctification and redemption."

Christianity then is assuredly something more than a mere set of rules; and faith, though it never pretended to be the substitute for an useful life, is indispensably necessary to its acceptance with God. The Gospel never offers to make religion supersede morality, but everywhere clearly proves that morality is not the whole of religion. Piety is not only necessary as a *means*, but is itself a most important *end*. It is not only the best principle of moral conduct, but is an indispensable and absolute duty in itself.

It is not only the higheſt motive to the practice of virtue, but is a prior obligation, and abſolutely neceſſary, even when detached from its immediate influence on outward actions. Religion will ſurvive all the virtues of which it is the ſource; for we ſhall be living in the nobleſt exerciſes of piety when we ſhall have no objects on which to exerciſe many human virtues. When there will be no diſtreſs to be relieved, no injuries to be forgiven, no evil habits to be ſubdued, there will be a Creator to be bleſſed and adored, a Redeemer to be loved and praiſed.

To conclude, a real Chriſtian is not ſuch merely by habit, profeſſion, or education; he is not a Chriſtian in order to acquit his ſponſors of the engagements they entered into in his name; but he is one who has embraced Chriſtianity from a conviction of its truth, and an experience of its excellence. He is not only confident in matters of faith by evidences ſuggeſted to his underſtanding, or reaſons which correſpond

to his enquiries; but all theſe evidences of truth, all theſe principles of goodneſs, are worked into his heart, and exhibit themſelves in his practice. He ſees ſo much of the body of the great truths and fundamental points of religion, that he has a ſatisfactory truſt in thoſe leſſer branches which ramify to infinity from the parent ſtock; though he may not individually and completely comprehend them all. He is ſo powerfully convinced of the general truth, and ſo deeply impreſſed by the general ſpirit of the Goſpel, that he is not ſtartled by every little difficulty, he is not ſtaggered by every "hard ſaying." Thoſe depths of myſtery which ſurpaſs his underſtanding do not ſhake his faith, and this, not becauſe he is credulous, and given to take things upon truſt, but becauſe, knowing that his foundations are right, he ſees how one truth of ſcripture ſupports another like the bearings of a geometrical building; becauſe he ſees the aſpect one doctrine has upon another; becauſe he ſees the conſiſtency of each with the

the reſt, and the place, order, and relation of all. The real Chriſtian by no means rejects reaſon from his religion; ſo far from it, he moſt carefully exerciſes it in furniſhing his mind with all the evidences of its truth. But he does not ſtop here. Chriſtianity furniſhes him with a living principle of action, with the vital influences of the holy ſpirit, which, while it enlightens his faculties, rectifies his will, turns his knowledge into practice, ſanctifies his heart, changes his habits, and proves, that when faithfully received, the word of truth "is "life indeed, and is ſpirit indeed!"

REMARKS

ON THE

SPEECH OF M. DUPONT,

MADE IN THE

NATIONAL CONVENTION OF FRANCE,

ON THE SUBJECTS OF

RELIGION and PUBLIC EDUCATION.

☞ *The Profits of this Publication, which were considerable, were given to the* French Emigrant Clergy.

A PREFATORY ADDRESS

TO THE

LADIES, &c. of GREAT BRITAIN,

IN BEHALF OF THE

FRENCH EMIGRANT CLERGY.

IF it be allowed that there may ariſe occaſions ſo extraordinary, that all the leſſer motives of delicacy ought to vaniſh before them; it is preſumed that the preſent emergency will be conſidered as preſenting one of thoſe occaſions, and will in ſome meaſure juſtify the hardineſs of this Addreſs from a private individual, who, ſtimulated by the urgency of the caſe, ſacrifices inferior conſiderations to the ardent deſire of raiſing further ſupplies towards relieving a diſtreſs as preſſing as it is unexampled.

We

We are informed by public advertifement, that the large fums already fo liberally fubfcribed for the Emigrant Clergy are almoft exhaufted. Authentic information adds, that multitudes of diftreffed Exiles in the ifland of Jerfey, are on the point of wanting bread.

Very many to whom this Addrefs is made have already contributed. O let them not be weary in well-doing! I know that many are making generous exertions for the juft and natural claims of the widows and children of our own brave feamen and foldiers. Let it not be faid, that the prefent is an *interfering* claim. Thofe to whom I write, have bread enough, and to fpare. You, who fare fumptuoufly every day, and yet complain that you have little to beftow, let not this bounty be fubtracted from another bounty, but fubtract it rather from fome fuperfluous expence.

The beneficent and right-minded want no arguments to be preffed upon them; but it is not thofe alone whom I addrefs;

I write to perſons of every deſcription. Luxurious habits of living, which really furniſh the diſtreſſed with the faireſt grounds for application, are too often urged by thoſe who practiſe them as a motive for withholding aſſiſtance, and produced as a plea for having little to ſpare. Let her who indulges ſuch habits, and pleads ſuch excuſes in conſequence, reflect, that by retrenching *one* coſtly diſh from her abundant table, by cutting off the ſuperfluities of *one* expenſive deſert, omitting *one* evening's public amuſement, ſhe may furniſh at leaſt a week's ſubſiſtence to more than one perſon *, as liberally bred perhaps as herſelf, and who, in his own country, may have often taſted how much more bleſſed it is to give than to receive——to a once affluent miniſter of religion, who has been long accuſtomed to beſtow the neceſſaries he is now reduced to ſolicit.

* Mr. Bowdler's letter ſtates, that about Six Shillings a week includes the expences of each Prieſt at Wincheſter.

Even

Even your young daughters, whom maternal prudence has not yet furniſhed with the means of beſtowing, may be cheaply taught the firſt rudiments of charity, together with an important leſſon of œconomy: they may be taught to ſacrifice a feather, a ſet of ribbons, an expenſive ornament, an idle diverſion. And if they are on this occaſion inſtructed, that there is no true charity without ſelf-denial, they will *gain* more than they are called upon to *give*: for the ſuppreſſion of one luxury for a charitable purpoſe, is the exerciſe of two virtues, and this without any pecuniary expence.—An indulgence is abridged and Chriſtian charity is exerciſed.

Let the ſick and afflicted remember how dreadful it muſt be, to be expoſed to the ſufferings they feel without one of the alleviations which mitigate *their* affliction. How dreadful it is to be without comforts, without neceſſaries, without a home,—*without a country!* While the gay and proſperous would do well to recollect, how

ſuddenly and terribly thoſe unhappy perſons for whom we plead, were, by the ſurpriſing viciſſitudes of life, thrown down from heights of gaiety and proſperity equal to what *they* are now enjoying. And let thoſe who have huſbands, fathers, ſons, brothers, or friends, reflect on the uncertainties of war, and the revolution of human affairs. It is only by imagining the poſſibility that thoſe who are dear to us may be placed by the inſtability of human events in the ſame calamitous circumſtances, that we can obtain an adequate feeling of the woes we are called upon to commiſerate.

In a diſtreſs ſo wide and comprehenſive as the preſent, many are prevented from giving by that popular excuſe—"That it is "but a drop of water in the ocean." But let them reflect, that if all the individual drops were withheld, there would be no ocean at all; and the inability to give much ought not, on any occaſion, to be converted into an excuſe for giving nothing. Even moderate circumſtances need not plead an

exemption.

exemption. The induſtrious tradeſman will not, even in a political view, be eventually a loſer by his ſmall contribution. The money now raiſed is neither carried out of our country, nor diſſipated in luxuries, but returns again to the community; returns to our ſhops and to our markets, to procure the bare neceſſaries of life.

Some have objected to the difference of *religion* of thoſe for whom we ſolicit. Such an objection hardly deſerves a ſerious anſwer. Surely if the ſuperſtitious Tartar hopes to become poſſeſſed of the courage and talents of the enemy he ſlays, the Chriſtian is not afraid of catching, or of propagating the error of the ſufferer he relieves.—Chriſtian charity is of no party. We plead not for their faith, but for their wants. But while we affirm that it is not for their popery but their poverty for which we ſolicit; yet let the more ſcrupulous, who look for deſert as well as diſtreſs in the objects of their bounty, bear in mind, that if theſe men could have ſacrificed their con-

confcience to their convenience, they had not now been in this country; and if we wifh for profelytes, who knows but it may be the firft ftep towards their converfion, if we fhew them the purity of *our* religion, by the beneficence of our actions.

If you will permit me to prefs upon you fuch high motives, (and it were to be wifhed that in every action we were to be influenced only by the higheft,) perhaps no act of bounty to which you may be called out, can ever come fo immediately, and fo literally under that folemn and affecting defcription, which will be recorded in the great day of account,—*I was a ftranger, and ye took me in.*——

The following is an exact Translation from a SPEECH *made in the National Convention at Paris, on Friday the* 14*th of December* 1792, *in a Debate on the Subject of establishing Public Schools for the Education of Youth, by Citizen* DUPONT, *a Member of considerable Weight; and as the Doctrines contained in it were received with unanimous Applause, except from two or three of the Clergy, it may be fairly considered as an Exposition of the Creed of that Enlightened Assembly. Translated from* Le Moniteur *of Sunday the* 16*th of December* 1792.

WHAT! Thrones are overturned! Sceptres broken! Kings expire! And yet the altars of GOD remain! (Here there is a murmur from some Members; and the Abbé ICHON demands that the person speaking may be called to order.) Tyrants, in outrage to nature, continue to burn an impious

pious incenſe on thoſe altars! (Some murmurs ariſe, but they are loſt in the applauſes from the majority of the Aſſembly.) The thrones that have been reverſed, have left theſe altars naked, unſupported, and tottering. A ſingle breath of enlightened reaſon will now be ſufficient to make them diſappear; and if humanity is under obligations to the French nation for the firſt of theſe benefits, the fall of Kings, can it be doubted but that the French people, now ſovereign, will be wiſe enough, in like manner, to overthrow thoſe altars and *thoſe Idols* to which thoſe Kings have hitherto made them ſubject? *Nature* and *Reaſon*, theſe ought to be the gods of men! Theſe are my gods! (Here the Abbé AUDREIN cried out, "There is no bearing this;" and ruſhed out of the Aſſembly.—A great laugh.) Admire *nature*—cultivate *reaſon*.— And you, Legiſlators, if you deſire that the French people ſhould be happy, make haſte to propagate theſe principles, and to teach them in your primary ſchools, inſtead

of thofe fanatical principles which have hitherto been taught. The tyranny of Kings was confined to make their people miferable in this life—but thofe other tyrants, the Priefts, extend their dominion into another, of which they have no other idea than of eternal punifhments; a doctrine which fome men have hitherto had the good nature to believe. But the moment of the cataftrophe is come—all thefe prejudices muft fall at the fame time. *We muft deftroy them, or they will deftroy us.*—For myfelf, I honeftly avow to the Convention, *I am an atheift!* (Here there is fome noife and tumult. But a great number of members cry out, "What is that to us—you are an "honeft man!") But I defy a fingle individual, amongft the twenty-four millions of Frenchmen, to make againft me any well-grounded reproach. I doubt whether the Chriftians or the Catholics, of which the laft fpeaker, and thofe of his opinion, have been talking to us, can make the fame challenge.—(Great applaufes.) There is another

may ſpread the ſame lights, and may operate, *for the happineſs of mankind*, ſimilar revolutions throughout the world.

(Numberleſs applauſes aroſe, almoſt throughout the whole Aſſembly, and in the galleries.)

REMARKS

ON THE

SPEECH OF MR. DUPONT,

ON THE SUBJECTS OF

RELIGION and PUBLIC EDUCATION.

IT is presumed that it may not be thought unseasonable at this critical time to offer to the public, and especially to the more religious part of it, a few slight observations, occasioned by the late famous speech of Mr. Dupont, which exhibits the confession of faith of a considerable Member of the French National Convention. Though the speech itself has been pretty generally read, yet it was thought necessary to prefix it to these remarks, lest such as have not already perused it, might, from an honest reluc-

tance to credit the exiſtence of ſuch principles, diſpute its authenticity, and accuſe the remarks, if unaccompanied by the ſpeech, of a ſpirit of invective and unfair exaggeration. At the ſame time it muſt be confeſſed, that its impiety is ſo monſtrous, that many good men were of opinion it ought not to be made familiar to the minds of Engliſhmen; for there are crimes with which even the imagination ſhould never come in contact, and which it is almoſt ſafer not to controvert than to detail.

But as an ancient nation intoxicated their ſlaves, and then expoſed them before their children, in order to increaſe their horror of intemperance; ſo it is hoped that this piece of impiety may be placed in ſuch a light before the eyes of the Chriſtian reader, that, in proportion as his deteſtation is raiſed, his faith, inſtead of being ſhaken, will be only ſo much the more ſtrengthened.

This celebrated ſpeech, though delivered in an aſſembly of politicians, is not on a

queſtion

queſtion of politics, but on one as ſuperior to all political conſiderations as the ſoul is to the body, as eternity is to time. The object of this oration is not to dethrone kings, but HIM by whom kings reign. It does not excite the cry of indignation in the orator that *Louis* the Sixteenth reigns, but that *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*.

Nor is this the declaration of ſome obſcure and anonymous perſon, but it is an expoſition of the creed of a public leader. It is not a ſentiment hinted in a journal, hazarded in a pamphlet, or thrown out at a diſputing club; but it is the implied faith of the rulers of a great nation.

Little notice would have been due to this famous ſpeech, if it had conveyed the ſentiments of only *one* vain orator; but it ſhould be obſerved, that it was heard, received, *applauded*, with two or three exceptions only—a fact, which you, who have ſcarcely believed in the exiſtence of atheiſm, will hardly credit, and which, for the honour of the eighteenth century, it is hoped that

our

our poſterity will reject as totally incredible.

A love of liberty, generous in its principle, inclines ſome well meaning but miſtaken men ſtill to favour the proceedings of the National Convention of France. They do not yet perceive that the licentious wildneſs which has been excited in that country, is deſtructive of all true happineſs, and no more reſembles liberty, than the tumultuous joys of the drunkard reſemble the chearfulneſs of a ſober and well-regulated mind.

To thoſe who do not know of what ſtrange inconſiſtencies man is made up; who have not conſidered how ſome perſons, having at firſt been haſtily and heedleſsly drawn in as approvers, by a ſort of natural progreſſion, ſoon become principals:--to thoſe who have never obſerved by what a variety of ſtrange aſſociations in the mind, opinions that ſeem the moſt irreconcilable meet at ſome unſuſpected turning, and come to be united in the ſame man;—to all ſuch it may appear quite incredible, that well-meaning and even pious people ſhould con-

tinue

tinue to applaud the principles of a ſet of men who have publicly made known their intention of aboliſhing Chriſtianity, as far as the demolition of altars, prieſts, temples, and inſtitutions, *can* aboliſh it. As to the religion itſelf, this alſo they may traduce and reject, but we know, from the comfortable promiſe of an authority ſtill ſacred in this country at leaſt, that *the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.*

Let me not be miſunderſtood by thoſe to whom theſe ſlight remarks are principally addreſſed; by that claſs of well intentioned but ill-judging people, who favour at leaſt, if they do not adopt, the prevailing ſentiments of the new Republic. You are not here accuſed of being the wilful abettors of infidelity. God forbid! "we are perſuaded better things of you, and things "which accompany ſalvation." But this *ignis fatuus* of liberty and univerſal brotherhood, which the French are madly purſuing, with the inſignia of freedom in one hand, and the bloody bayonet in the other, has

has bewitched your ſenſes, is miſleading your ſteps, and betraying you to ruin. You are gazing at a meteor raiſed by the vapours of vanity, which theſe wild and infatuated wanderers are purſuing to their deſtruction; and though for a moment you miſtake it for a heaven-born light, which leads to the perfection of human freedom, you will, ſhould you join in the mad purſuit, ſoon diſcover that it will conduct you over dreary wilds and ſinking bogs, only to plunge you in deep and inevitable deſtruction.

Much, very much is to be ſaid in vindication of your favouring in the *firſt inſtance* their political projects. The cauſe they took in hand ſeemed to be the great cauſe of human kind. Its very name inſured its popularity. What Engliſh heart did not exult at the demolition of the Baſtile? What lover of his ſpecies did not triumph in the warm hope, that one of the fineſt countries in the world would ſoon be one of the moſt free? Popery and deſpotiſm, though

though chained by the gentle influence of Louis the Sixteenth, had actually ſlain their thouſands. Little was it then imagined, that anarchy and atheiſm, the monſters who were about to ſucceed them, would ſoon ſlay their ten thouſands. If we cannot regret the defeat of the two former tyrants, what muſt they be who can triumph in the miſchiefs of the two latter? Who, I ſay, that had a head to reaſon, or a heart to feel, did not glow with the hope, that from the ruins of tyranny, and the rubbiſh of popery, a beautiful and finely framed edifice would in time have been conſtructed, and that ours would not have been the only country in which the patriot's fair idea of well-underſtood liberty, the politician's view of a perfect Conſtitution, together with the eſtabliſhment of a pure and reaſonable, a ſublime and rectified Chriſtianity, might be realized?

But, alas! it frequently happens that the wiſe and good are not the moſt adventurous in attacking the miſchiefs which they are the firſt to perceive and lament. With a timidity

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in ſome reſpects virtuous, they fear attempting any thing which may poſſibly aggravate the evils they deplore, or put to hazard the bleſſings they already enjoy. They dread plucking up the wheat with the tares, and are rather apt, with a ſpirit of hopeleſs reſignation,

> " To bear the ills they have,
> " Than fly to others that they know not of."

While ſober-minded and conſiderate men, therefore, ſat mourning over this complicated maſs of error, and waited till God, in his own good time, ſhould open the blind eyes; the vaſt ſcheme of reformation was left to that ſet of raſh and preſumptuous adventurers, who are generally watching how they may convert public grievances to their own perſonal account. It was undertaken, not upon the broad baſis of a wiſe and well-digeſted ſcheme, of which all the parts ſhould contribute to the perfection of one conſiſtent whole: it was carried on, not by thoſe ſteady meaſures, founded on rational deliberation, which are calculated

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to accomplish so important an end; not with a temperance which indicated a sober love of law, or a sacred regard for religion; but with the most extravagant lust of power, with the most inordinate vanity which perhaps ever instigated human measures—a lust of power which threatens to extend its desolating influence over the whole globe; —a vanity of the same destructive species with that which stimulated the celebrated incendiary of Ephesus, who being weary of his native obscurity and insignificance, and preferring infamy to oblivion, could contrive no other road to fame and immortality, than that of setting fire to the exquisite Temple of Diana. He *was* remembered indeed, as he desired to be, but it was only to be execrated; while the seventh wonder of the world lay prostrate through his crime.

But too often that daring boldness which excites admiration, is not energy, is not virtue, is not genius. It is blindness in the judgment, is vanity in the heart. Strong and unprecedented

cedented meaſures, plans inſtantaneouſly conceived, and as rapidly executed, argue, not ability, but arrogance. A mind continually driven out in queſt of preſumptuous novelties, is commonly a mind void of real reſources within, and incapable of profiting from obſervation without. Sure principles cannot be aſcertained without experiment, and experiment requires more time than the ſanguine can ſpare, and more patience then the vain poſſeſs. In the crude ſpeculations of theſe raſh reformiſts, few obſtructions occur. It is like taking a journey, not on a road, but on a map. Difficulties are unſeen, or are kept in the back-ground. Impoſſibilities are ſmothered, or rather they are not ſuffered to be born. Nothing is felt but the ardour of enterprize, nothing is ſeen but the certainty of ſucceſs. Whereas if difficulties grow out of ſober experiment, the diſappointments attending them generate humility; the failures inſeparable from the beſt concerted human undertakings, ſerve at once to multiply reſources, and to

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excite ſelf-diſtruſt; while ideal projectors, and actual demoliſhers, are the moſt conceited of mortals. It never occurs to them that thoſe defects of old inſtitutions, on which they frame their objections, are equally palpable to all other men. It never occurs to them that phrenzy can demoliſh faſter than wiſdom can build; that pulling down the ſtrongeſt edifice is far more eaſy than the reconſtruction of the meaneſt; that the moſt ignorant labourer is competent to the one, while for the other the ſkill of the architect, and the patient induſtry of the workman muſt unite. That a ſound judgment will profit by the errors of our predeceſſors, as well as by their excellences. That there is a retroſpective wiſdom to which much of our proſpective wiſdom owes its birth; and that after all, neither the perfection pretended to, nor the pride which accompanies the pretenſion, "is "made for man."

It is the ſame over-ruling vanity which operates in their politics, and in their religion,

ligion, which makes Kerſaint * boaſt of carrying his deſtructive projects from the Tagus to the Brazils, and from Mexico to the ſhores of the Ganges; which makes him menace to outſtrip the enterprizes of the moſt extravagant hero of romance, and almoſt undertake with the marvellous celerity of the nimble-footed Puck,

"To put a girdle round about the earth
"In forty minutes."——

It is the ſame vanity, ſtill the maſter-paſſion in the boſom of a Frenchman, which leads Dupont and Manuel to undertake in their orations to aboliſh the Sabbath, to exterminate the prieſthood, to erect a pantheon for the world, to reſtore the peripatetic philoſophy, and in ſhort to revive every thing of ancient Greece, except the pure taſte, the profound wiſdom, the love of virtue, the veneration of the laws, and that high degree of reverence which even virtuous Pagans profeſſed for the Deity.

* See his ſpeech, enumerating their intended projects.

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It is the ſame ſpirit of novelty, and the ſame hoſtility to eſtabliſhed opinions, which dictated the prepoſterous and impious doctrine that *death is an eternal ſleep.* The Prophets and Apoſtles aſſert the contrary. David expreſsly ſays, "when I *awake* up "after thy likeneſs I ſhall be ſatisfied;" implying, that our true life will begin at our departure out of this world. The deſtruction or diſſolution of the body will be the revival, not the death, of the ſoul.—It is to the *living* the Apoſtle ſays, "*awake* "thou that *ſleepeſt*, and ariſe from the "DEAD, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light."

It is ſurely to be charged to the inadequate and wretched hands into which the work of reformation fell, and not to the impoſſibility of amending the civil and religious inſtitutions of France, that all has ſucceeded ſo ill. It cannot be denied perhaps, that a reforming ſpirit was wanted in that country; their government was not more deſpotic, than their church was ſuperſtitious and corrupt.

But though this is readily granted, and though it may be unfair to blame those who in the *first outset* of the French Revolution, rejoiced even on religious motives; yet it is astonishing, how any pious person, even with all the blinding power of prejudice, can think without horror of the *present* state of France. It is no less wonderful how any rational man could, even in the beginning of the Revolution, transfer that reasoning, however just it might be, when applied to France, to the case of England. For what can be more unreasonable, than to draw from different, and even opposite premises, the same conclusion? Must a revolution be equally necessary in the case of two sorts of Government, and two sorts of Religion, which are the very reverse of each other?—opposite in their genius, unlike in their fundamental principles, and completely different in each of their component parts.

That despotism, priestcraft, intolerance, and superstition, are terrible evils, no candid

did Chriſtian it is preſumed will deny; but, bleſſed be God, though theſe miſchiefs are not yet entirely baniſhed from the face of the earth, they have ſcarcely any exiſtence in this happy country.

To guard againſt a real danger, and to cure actual abuſes, of which the exiſtence has been firſt plainly proved, by the application of a ſuitable remedy, requires diligence as well as courage; obſervation as well as genius; patience and temperance as well as zeal and ſpirit. It requires the union of that clear head and ſound heart which conſtitute the true patriot. But to conjure up fancied evils, or even greatly to aggravate real ones, and then to exhauſt our labour in combating them, is the characteriſtic of a diſtempered imagination and an ill-governed ſpirit.

Romantic cruſades, the ordeal trial, drowning of witches, the torture, and the inquiſition, have been juſtly reprobated as the fouleſt ſtains of the reſpective periods in which, to the diſgrace of human reaſon,

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they exiſted; but would any man be rationally employed, who ſhould now ſtand up gravely to declaim againſt theſe as the predominating miſchiefs of the preſent century? Even the whimſical Knight of La Mancha himſelf, would not fight windmills that were pulled down; yet I will venture to ſay, that the above-named evils are at preſent little more chimerical than ſome of thoſe now ſo bitterly complained of among us. It is not as Dryden ſaid, when one of his works was unmercifully abuſed, that the piece has not faults enough in it, but the critics have not had the wit to fix upon the right ones.

It is allowed that, as a Nation, we do not want faults; but our political critics err in the objects of their cenſure. They ſay little of thoſe real and preſſing evils reſulting from our own corruption, of that depravity which conſtitutes the actual miſeries of life; while they gloomily ſpeculate upon a thouſand imaginary political grievances, and fancy that the reformation of our rulers and

and our legiſlators is all that is wanting to make us a happy people. Alas!

How ſmall, of all that human hearts endure,
That part, which Kings or Laws can cauſe, or cure.

The principles of juſt and equitable government were, perhaps, never more fully eſtabliſhed, nor was public juſtice ever more exactly adminiſtered. Pure and undefiled religion was never laid more open to all, than at this day. I wiſh I could ſay we were a religious people; but this at leaſt may be ſafely aſſerted, that the great truths of religion were never better underſtood; that Chriſtianity was never more completely ſtripped from all its incumbrances and diſguiſes, or more thoroughly purged from human infuſions, and from whatever is debaſing in human inſtitutions, than it is at this day in this country.

In vain we look around us to diſcover the ravages of religious tyranny, or the triumphs of prieſtcraft or ſuperſtition. Who attempts to impoſe any yoke upon our reaſon? Who ſeeks to put any blind on the eyes of

the moſt illiterate? Who fetters the judgment or enſlaves the conſcience of the meaneſt of our Proteſtant brethren? Nay, ſuch is the power of pure Chriſtianity, that genuine Chriſtianity which is exhibited in our liturgy to enlighten the underſtanding, as well as to reform the heart, and ſuch are the advantages which the moſt abject in this country poſſeſs for enjoying its privileges, that the pooreſt peaſant among us, if he be as religious as multitudes of his ſtation really are, has clearer ideas of God and his own ſoul, purer notions of that true liberty wherewith Chriſt has made him free, than the mere diſputer of this world, though he poſſeſs every ſplendid advantage which education, wiſdom, and genius can beſtow. I am not ſpeaking either of a *perfect* form of Government, or a *perfect* Church Eſtabliſhment, becauſe I am ſpeaking of Inſtitutions which are human; and the very idea of their being human, involves alſo the idea of imperfection. But I am ſpeaking of the beſt conſtituted Government, and the beſt

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conſtituted National Church with which the hiſtory of mankind is yet acquainted. Time, that ſilent inſtructor, and experience, that great rectifier of the judgment, will more and more diſcover to us what is wanting to the perfection of both. And if we may truſt to the active genius of Chriſtian Liberty, and to that liberal and candid ſpirit which is the characteriſtic of the age we live in, there is little doubt but that a temperate and well-regulated zeal will, at a convenient ſeaſon, correct whatſoever ſound policy ſhall ſuggeſt as wiſe and expedient to be corrected.

If there are errors in the Church, and it does not perhaps require the ſharp-ſightedneſs of a keen oppoſer to diſcover that there are, there is at leaſt nothing like fierce intolerance, or ſpiritual uſurpation. A fiery zeal and an uncharitable bigotry might have furniſhed matter for a well-deſerved eccleſiaſtical philippic in other times; but thanks to the temper of the preſent day, unleſs we conjure up a ſpirit of religious chivalry, and ſally forth in queſt of imaginary evils,

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we ſhall not apprehend any danger from perſecution or enthuſiaſm. If grievances there are, they do not appear to be thoſe which reſult from polemic pride and rigid bigotry, but are of a kind far different.

If the warm ſun of proſperity has unhappily produced its too common effect, in relaxing the vigour of religious exertion; if, in too many inſtances, ſecurity has engendered ſloth, and affluence produced diſſipation; let us implore the Divine grace, that the preſent alarming criſis may rouſe the careleſs, and quicken the ſupine; that our paſtors may be convinced that the Church has leſs to fear from external violence, than from internal decay; nay, that even the violence of attack is often really beneficial, by exciting that activity which enables us to repel danger, and that increaſe of diligence is the trueſt acceſſion of ſtrength. May they be convinced that the love of power, with which their enemies perhaps unjuſtly accuſe them, is not more fatal than the love of pleaſure: that no ſtout-

neſs of orthodoxy in opinion can atone for a too cloſe aſſimilation with the manners of the world; that hereſy without, is leſs to be dreaded than indifference from within: that the moſt regular clerical education, the moſt ſcrupulous attention to forms, and even the ſtricteſt conformity to the eſtabliſhed diſcipline and opinions of the Church, will avail but little to the enlargement of Chriſt's kingdom, without a ſtrict ſpirit of perſonal watchfulneſs, habitual ſelf-denial, and laborious exertion.

Though it is not here intended to animadvert on any political complaint which is not in ſome ſort connected with religion; yet it is preſumed it may not be thought quite foreign to the preſent purpoſe to remark, that among the reigning complaints againſt our civil adminiſtration, the moſt plauſible ſeems to be that excited by the ſuppoſed danger of an invaſion on the liberty of the preſs. Were this apprehenſion well-founded, we ſhould indeed be threatened by one of the moſt grievous

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misfortunes that can befal a free country. The liberty of the preſs is not only a moſt noble privilege itſelf, but the guardian of all our other liberties and privileges, and, notwithſtanding the abuſe which has lately been made of this valuable poſſeſſion, yet every man of a ſound unprejudiced mind is well aware that true liberty of every kind is ſcarcely inferior in importance to any object for which human activity can contend. Nay, the very abuſe of a good, often makes us more ſenſible of the value of the good itſelf. Fair and well-proportioned Freedom will ever retain all her native beauty to a judicious eye, nor will the genuine lovelineſs of her form be the leſs prized for our having lately contemplated the diſtorted features and falſe colouring of her caricature, as preſented to us by the daubing hand of Gallic patriots.

But highly as the freedom of the preſs ought to be valued, would it really be ſo very heavy a misfortune, if corrupt and inflaming publications, calculated to deſtroy that

that virtue which every good man is anxious to preserve, that peace which every honest man is struggling to secure, should, just at this alarming period, be somewhat difficult to be obtained? Would it be so very grievous a national calamity, if the crooked progeny of treason and blasphemy should find it a little inconvenient to venture forth from their lurking-holes, and range abroad in open day? Is the cheapness of poison, or the facility with which it may be obtained, to be reckoned among the real advantages of medicinal repositories? And can the easiness of access to seditious or atheistical writings, be seriously numbered among the substantial blessings of any country? Would France, at this day, have had much solid cause of regret, if most of the writings of Voltaire, Rousseau, and d'Alembert, (the prolific seed of their wide-spreading tree,) had found more difficulty in getting into the world, or been less profusely circulated when in it? And might not England at this moment have been just as happy in her ignorance, if the famous orations of Citizen Dupont

Dupont and Citizen Manuel had been confined to their own enlightened and philosophical countries * ?

To

* *Extract from Monf. Manuel's Letter to the National Convention, dated January 26, 1793.*

" The priefts of a republic are its magiftrates, the law its gofpel. What miffion can be more auguft than that of the inftructors of youth, who having themfelves efcaped from the hereditary prejudice of all fects, point out to the human race their inalienable rights, founded upon that fublime wifdom which pervades all nature. Religious faith, impreffed on the mind of an infant feven years old, will lead to perfect flavery; for dogmas at that age are only arbitrary commands. Ah! what is belief, without examination, without conviction? It renders men either melancholy or mad, &c.

" Legiflators! Virtue wants neither temples nor fynagogues. It is not from priefts we learn to do good or noble actions. No religion muft be taught in fchools which are to be national ones. To prefcribe one, would be to prefer it to all others. There hiftory muft fpeak of fects, as fhe fpeaks of other events. It would become your wifdom, perhaps, to order that the pupils of the republic fhould not enter the temples before the age of feventeen. Reafon muft not be taken by furprife, &c. Hardly were children born

before

To return to theſe orations:—We have too often, in our own nation, ſeen and deplored the miſchiefs of irreligion, ariſing incidentally from a neglected or an abuſed education. But what miſchiefs will not irreligion produce, when, in the projected ſchools of France, as announced to us by the two metaphyſical legiſlators above-mentioned, impiety ſhall be taught by ſyſtem? When out of the mouths of babes and ſucklings the monſtrous opinions, exhibited by Dupont and Manuel, ſhall be perfected? When the fruits of atheiſm, dropping from their newly-planted tree of liberty, ſhall pollute the very fountains of knowledge? When education, being poiſoned in all her ſprings, the riſing generation will be taught to look on atheiſm as decorous, and Chriſtianity as eccentric? When atheiſm ſhall be

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before they fell into the hands of prieſts, who firſt blinded their eyes, and then delivered them over to kings. Wherever kings ceaſe to govern, prieſts muſt ceaſe to educate."

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considered as a proof of accomplished breeding, and religion as the stamp of a vulgar education? When the regular course of obedience to masters and tutors will consist in renouncing the hope of everlasting happiness, and in deriding the idea of future punishment? When every man and every child, in conformity with the principles professed in the Convention, shall presume to say with his tongue, what hitherto even the fool has only dared to say in his heart, *That there is no God* *.

Christianity

* It is a remarkable circumstance, that though the French are continually binding themselves by oaths, they have not mentioned the name of GOD in any oath which has been invented since the revolution. It may also appear curious to the English reader, that though in almost all the addresses of congratulation, which were sent by the associated clubs from this country to the National Convention, the success of the French arms was in part ascribed to Divine Providence, yet in none of the answers was the least notice ever taken of this. And to shew how the same spirit spreads itself among every description of men in France, their

Admiral

Christianity, which involves the whole duty of man, divides that duty into two portions,—the love of God, and the love of our neighbour. Now, as these two principles have their being from the same source, and derive their vitality from their union; so impiety furnishes the direct converse,—*That* Atheism which destroys all belief in, and of course cuts off all love of, and communion with God, disqualifies for the due performance of the duties of civil and social life. There is, in its way, the same consistency, agreement, and uniformity, between the principles which constitute an infidel and a bad member of society, as there is between giving "glory to God in the "highest," and exercising "peace and "good will to men."

Admiral Latouche, after having described the dangers to which his ship was exposed in a storm, says, *we owe our existence to the tutelary Genius which watches over the destiny of the French republic, and the defenders of liberty and equality.*

My fellow Chriſtians! This is not a ſtrife of words; this is not a controverſy about opinions of comparatively ſmall importance, ſuch as you have been accuſtomed at home to hear even good men diſpute upon, when perhaps they would have acted a more wiſe and amiable part had they remained ſilent, ſacrificing their mutual differences on the altar of Chriſtian charity: But this bold renunciation of the firſt great fundamental article of faith, this daring rejection of the Supreme Creator and Ruler of the World, is laying the axe and ſtriking with a vigorous ſtroke at the root of all human happineſs. It is tearing up the very foundation of human hope, and extirpating every true principle of human excellence. It is annihilating the very exiſtence of virtue, by annihilating its motives, its ſanctions, its obligations, its object, and its end.

That atheiſm will be the favoured and the popular tenet in France ſeems highly probable; whilſt in that wild contempt of all religion, which has lately had the arro-

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gance to call itſelf toleration, it is not improbable that Chriſtianity itſelf may be tolerated in that country, as a ſect not perſecuted perhaps, but derided. It is, however, far from clear, that this *will* be the caſe, if the new doctrines ſhould become generally prevalent. Atheiſts are not without their bigotry; they too have their ſpirit of excluſion and monopoly in a degree not inferior to the moſt ſuperſtitious monks. And that very ſpirit of intolerance which is now ſo much the object of their invective, would probably be no leſs the rule of their practice, if their will ſhould ever be backed by power. It is true that Voltaire and the other great Apoſtles of infidelity have employed all the acuteneſs of their wit to convince us that irreligion never perſecutes. To prove this, every art of falſe citation, partial extract, ſuppreſſed evidence, and groſs miſrepreſentation, has been put in practice. But if this unſupported aſſertion were true, then Polycarp, Ignatius, Juſtin, Cyprian, and Baſil, did not ſuffer for the faith once de-

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livered to the Saints. Then the famous Chriſtian apologiſts, moſt of them learned converts from the pagan philoſophy, idly employed their zeal to abate a clamour which did not exiſt, and to propitiate emperors who did not perſecute. Then Tacitus, Trajan, Pliny, and Julian, thoſe bitter enemies to Chriſtianity, are ſuborned witneſſes on her ſide. Then Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory is a ſeries of falſehoods, and the Book of Martyrs a legend of romance *.

That one extravagant miſchief ſhould produce its oppoſite, is agreeable to the ordinary courſe of human events. That to the credulity of a dark and ſuperſtitious religion, a wanton contempt of all decency, and an

* It may be objected here, that this is not applicable to the ſtate of France; for that the Roman Emperors were not atheiſts or deiſts, but polytheiſts, with an eſtabliſhed religion. To this it may be anſwered, that modern infidels not only deny the ten pagan perſecutions, but accuſe Chriſtianity of being the only perſecuting religion; and affirm, that only thoſe who refuſe to embrace it diſcover a ſpirit of toleration.

unbridled

unbridled prophaneneſs, ſhould ſucceed; that to a government abſolutely deſpotic, an utter abhorrence of all reſtraint and ſubordination ſhould follow, though it is deplorable, yet it is not ſtrange. The human mind, in flying from the extreme verge of one error, ſeldom ſtops till ſhe has reached the oppoſite extremity. She generally paſſes by with a lofty diſdain the obvious truth which lies directly in her road, and which is indeed commonly to be found in the mid-way, between the error ſhe is flying from, and the error ſhe is purſuing.

Is it a breach of Chriſtian charity to conclude, from a view of the preſent ſtate of the French, that ſince that deluded people have given up GOD, GOD, by a righteous retribution, ſeems to have renounced them for a time, and to have given them over to their own hearts' luſts, *to work iniquity with greedineſs?* If ſuch is their preſent career, what is likely to be their appointed end? How fearfully applicable to them ſeems that awful denunciation againſt an ancient, offending

fending people—" The Lord ſhall ſmite " thee with madneſs, and blindneſs, and " aſtoniſhment of heart!"

It is no part of the preſent deſign to enter into a detail of their political conduct; but I cannot omit to remark, that the very man in their long liſt of kings, who ſeemed beſt to have deſerved their aſſumed appellation of *moſt Chriſtian*, was alſo moſt favourable to their acquiſition of liberty*: his moderation and humanity facilitated their plans, and increaſed their power, which, with unparalleled ingratitude, they employed to degrade his perſon and character in the eyes of mankind, by the blackeſt and moſt deteſtable arts, and at length to terminate his calamities by a crime which has excited the grief and indignation of all Europe.

On the trial and murder of that moſt unfortunate king, and on the inhuman pro-

* Of this the French themſelves were ſo well perſuaded, that the title of *Reſtorateur de la Liberté Françoiſe*, was ſolemnly given to Louis the XVIth by the Conſtituent Aſſembly.

ceedings

ceedings which accompanied them, I ſhall purpoſely avoid dwelling, for it is not the deſign of theſe remarks to excite the paſſions. I will only ſay, that ſo monſtrous has been the inverſion of all order, law, humanity, juſtice, received opinion, good faith, and religion, that the conduct of his bloody executioners ſeems to have exhibited the moſt ſcrupulous conformity with the principles announced in the ſpeeches we have been conſidering. In this one inſtance we muſt not call the French an inconſequent people. Savage brutality, rapine, treaſon, and murder have been the noxious fruit gathered from theſe thorns; the baneful produce of theſe thiſtles. An overturn of all morals has been the well-proportioned offſpring of a ſubverſion of all principle.

But, notwithſtanding the conſiſtency, in this inſtance, between cauſe and conſequence; ſo new and ſurpriſing have been the turns in their extraordinary projects, that to foretel what their next enterpriſe would be from what their laſt has been,

has long baffled all calculation, has long bid defiance to all conjecture. Analogy from hiſtory, the ſtudy of paſt events, and an inveſtigation of preſent principles and paſſions; judgment, memory, compariſon, combination, and deduction, afford human ſagacity but very ſlender aſſiſtance in its endeavours to develope their future plans. We have not even the data of conſiſtent wickedneſs on which to build rational concluſions. Their crimes, though viſibly connected by uniform depravity, are yet ſo ſurpriſingly diverſified by interfering abſurdities, as to furniſh no ground on which reaſonable argument can be founded. Nay, ſuch is their incredible eccentricity, that it is hardly extravagant to affirm, that improbability is become rather an additional reaſon for expecting any given event to take place.

But let us, in this yet happy country, learn at leaſt one great and important truth, from the errors of this diſtracted people. Their conduct has awfully illuſtrated a po-

ſition,

ſition, which is not the leſs ſound for having been often controverted, That no degree of wit and learning, no progreſs in commerce, no advances in the knowledge of nature, or in the embelliſhments of art, can ever thoroughly tame that ſavage, the *natural human heart*, without RELIGION. The arts of ſocial life may give ſweetneſs to manners, and grace to language, and induce, in ſome degree, a reſpect for juſtice, truth, and humanity; but attainments derived from ſuch inferior cauſes are no more than the ſemblance and the ſhadow of the qualities derived from pure Chriſtianity. Varniſh is an extraneous ornament, but true poliſh is a proof of the ſolidity of the body on whoſe ſurface it is produced. It depends greatly on the nature of the ſubſtance, is not ſuperinduced by accidental cauſes, but in a good meaſure proceeds from internal ſoundneſs.

The poets of that claſſic country, whoſe ſtyle, ſentiments, manners, and religion the French ſo affectedly labour to imitate,

have

have left keen and biting ſatires on the Roman vices. Againſt the late proceedings in France, no ſatiriſt need employ his pen; that of the hiſtorian will be quite ſufficient. Truth will be the ſevereſt ſatire; Fact will put fable out of countenance; and the crimes which are uſually held up to our abhorrence, and are rejected for their exaggeration in works of invention, will be regarded as flat and feeble by thoſe who ſhall peruſe the records of the tenth of Auguſt, of the ſecond and third of September, and of the twenty-firſt of January.

If the ſame aſtoniſhing degeneracy in taſte, principle, and practice, ſhould ever come to flouriſh among *us*, Britain may ſtill live to exult in the deſolation of her cities, and in the deſtruction of her fineſt monuments of art; ſhe may triumph in the peopling of the fortreſſes of her rocks and her foreſts; may exult in being once more reſtored to that glorious ſtate of *liberty and equality*, when all ſubſiſted by rapine and the chace; when all, O enviable privilege! were

were equally ſavage, equally indigent, and equally naked; her ſons may extol it as the reſtoration of reaſon, the triumph of nature, and the conſummation of liberty, that they are again brought to feed on acorns, inſtead of bread! Groves of conſecrated miſletoe may happily ſucceed to uſeleſs corn fields; and Thor and Woden may hope once more to be inveſted with all their bloody honours.

Let not any ſerious readers feel indignation, as if pains were ungenerouſly taken to involve their religious with their political opinions. Far be it from me to wound, unneceſſarily, the feelings of people, many of whom are truly eſtimable: but it is much to be ſuſpected, that certain opinions in politics have a tendency to lead to certain opinions in religion. Where ſo much is at ſtake, they will do well to keep their conſciences tender, in order to which they ſhould try to keep their diſcernment acute. They will do well to obſerve, that the ſame reſtleſs ſpirit of innovation is buſily operating under various, though ſeemingly unconnected

connected forms; to obſerve, that the ſame impatience of reſtraint, the ſame contempt of order, peace, and ſubordination, which makes men bad citizens, makes them bad Chriſtians; and that to this ſecret, but almoſt infallible connexion between religious and political ſentiment, does France owe her preſent unparalleled anarchy and impiety.

There are doubtleſs in that unhappy country multitudes of virtuous and reaſonable men, who rather ſilently acquieſce in the authority of their preſent turbulent government, than embrace its principles or promote its projects from the ſober conviction of their own judgment. Theſe, together with thoſe conſcientious exiles whom this nation ſo honourably protects, may yet live to rejoice in the reſtoration of true liberty and ſolid peace to their native country, when light and order ſhall ſpring from the preſent darkneſs and confuſion, and the reign of chaos ſhall be no more.

May

May I be permitted a ſhort digreſſion on the ſubject of the conduct of Great Britain to theſe exiles? It ſhall only be to remark, that all the boaſted conqueſts of our Edwards and our Henrys over the French nation, do not confer ſuch ſubſtantial glory on our own country, as ſhe derives from having received, protected, and ſupported, among innumerable multitudes of other ſufferers, at a time and under circumſtances ſo peculiarly diſadvantageous to herſelf, *three thouſand prieſts*, of a nation habitually her enemy, and of a religion intolerant and hoſtile to her own. This is the ſolid triumph of true Chriſtianity; and it is worth remarking, that the deeds which poets and hiſtorians celebrate as rare and ſplendid actions; which they record, as ſublime inſtances of greatneſs of ſoul, in the heroes of the Pagan world, are but the ordinary and habitual virtues which occur in the common courſe of action among Chriſtians; quietly performed without effort or exertion, and with no view to renown or reward; but re-

ſulting naturally and conſequently from the religion to which they belong.

So predominating is the power of an example we have once admired, and ſet up as a ſtandard of imitation, and ſo faſcinating has been the aſcendancy of the Convention over the minds of thoſe whoſe approbation of French politics commenced in the earlier periods of the Revolution, that it extends to the moſt trivial circumſtances. I cannot forbear to notice this in an inſtance which, though inconſiderable in itſelf, yet ceaſes to be ſo when we view it in the light of a prevailing ſymptom of the reigning diſeaſe.

While the fantaſtic phraſeology of the new Republic is ſuch, as to be almoſt as diſguſting to ſound taſte, as their doctrines are to ſound morals, it is curious to obſerve how deeply the addreſſes, which have been ſent to it from the Clubs * in this country, have been infected with it, as far at leaſt as

* See the Collection of Addreſſes from England.

phrases and terms are objects of imitation. In the more leading points it is but justice to the French Convention to confess, that they are hitherto without rivals and without imitators; for who can aspire to emulate that compound of anarchy and atheism which in their debates is mixed up with the pedantry of a school-boy, the jargon of a cabal, and the vulgarity and ill-breeding of a mob? One instance of the prevailing cant may suffice, where an hundred might be adduced; and it is not the most exceptionable.—To demolish every existing law and establishment; to destroy the fortunes and ruin the principles of every country into which they are carrying their destructive arms and their frantic doctrines; to untie or cut asunder every bond which holds society together; to impose their own arbitrary shackles where they succeed, and to demolish every thing where they fail.—This desolating system, by a most unaccountable perversion of language, they are pleased to call by the endearing name of

frater-

fraternization; and fraternization is one of the favourite terms which their admirers in this country have adopted. Little would a ſimple ſtranger, uninitiated in this new and ſurpriſing dialect, uninſtructed by the political Lexicographers of modern France, imagine that the peaceful terms of *fellow-citizen* and of *brother*, the winning offer of *freedom* and *happineſs*, and the warm embrace of *fraternity*, were only watch-words by which they, in effect,

> Cry havoc,
> And let ſlip the dogs of war.

In numberleſs other inſtances, the faſhionable language of France at this day would be as unintelligible to the correct writers of the age of Louis the XIVth, as their faſhionable notions of liberty would be irreconcileable with thoſe of the true Revolution Patriots of his great contemporary and victorious rival, William the Third.

Such is indeed their puerile rage for novelty in the invention of new words, and the

the perverſion of their taſte in the uſe of old ones, that the celebrated Voſſius, whom Chriſtina of Sweden oddly complimented by ſaying, that he was ſo learned as not only to know whence all words came, but whither they were going, would, *were he admitted to the honours of a ſitting*, be obliged to confeſs, that he was equally puzzled to tell the one, as to foretel the other.

If it ſhall pleaſe the Almighty in his anger to let looſe this infatuated people, as a ſcourge for the iniquities of the human race; if they are delegated by infinite juſtice to act, "as ſtorm and tempeſt fulfilling his word;" if they are commiſſioned to perform the errand of the deſtroying lightning or the avenging thunder-bolt, let us try at leaſt to extract perſonal benefit from national calamity; let every one of us, high and low, rich and poor, enter upon this ſerious and humbling inquiry, how much his own individual offences have contributed to that awful aggregate of public guilt, which has required ſuch a viſitation. Let us carefully

examine in what proportion we have separately added to that common ſtock of abounding iniquity, the deſcription of which formed the character of an ancient nation, and is ſo peculiarly applicable to our own—*Pride, fulneſs of bread, and abundance of idleneſs.* Let every one of us humbly inquire, in the ſelf-ſuſpecting language of the diſciples to their Divine Maſter—*Lord, is it I?* Let us learn to fear the fleets and armies of the enemy, much leſs than thoſe iniquities at home which this alarming diſpenſation may be intended to chaſtize.

The war which the French have declared againſt us, is of a kind altogether unexampled in every reſpect; inſomuch that human wiſdom is baffled when it would pretend to conjecture what may be the event. But this at leaſt we may ſafely ſay, that it is not ſo much the force of French bayonets, as the contamination of French principles, that ought to excite our apprehenſions. We truſt, that through the bleſſing of God we ſhall be defended from their open hoſtilities,

by the temperate wiſdom of our rulers, and the bravery of our fleets and armies; but the domeſtic danger ariſing from licentious and irreligious principles among ourſelves, can only be guarded againſt by the perſonal care and vigilance of every one of us who values religion and the good order of ſociety in this world, and an eternity of happineſs in the next.

God grant that thoſe who go forth to fight our battles, inſtead of being intimidated by the number of their enemies, may bear in mind, that "there is no reſtraint "with God to ſave by many or by few." And let the meaneſt among us who remains at home remember alſo, that even he may contribute to the internal ſafety of his country, by the integrity of his private life, and to the ſucceſs of her defenders, by following them with his fervent prayers. And in what war can the ſincere Chriſtian ever have ſtronger inducements and more reaſonable encouragement to pray for the ſucceſs of his country, than in this? Without

out entering far into any political principles, the diſcuſſion of which would be in a great meaſure foreign to the deſign of this little tract, it may be remarked, that the unchriſtian principle of *revenge* is not our motive to this war; *conqueſt* is not our object; nor have we had recourſe to hoſtility, in order to effect a change in the internal government of France *. The preſent war is undoubtedly undertaken entirely on defenſive principles. It is in defence of our king, our conſtitution, our religion, our laws, and conſequently our *liberty*, in the ſound, ſober, and rational ſenſe of that term. It is to defend ourſelves from the ſavage violence of a cruſade, made againſt all religion, as well as all government. If ever therefore a war was undertaken on the ground of ſelf-defence and neceſſity—if ever men might be *literally*

* See the Report of Mr. Pitt's Speech in the Houſe of Commons on Feb. 12, 1793, publiſhed by Woodfall.

ſaid

ſaid to fight *pro* ARIS *et* FOCIS, this ſeems to be the occaſion.

The ambition of conquerors has been the ſource of great and extenſive evils: religious fanaticiſm, of ſtill greater. But little as I am diſpoſéd to become the apologiſt of either the one principle or the other, there is no extravagance in aſſerting, that they have ſeemed incapable of producing, even in ages, that extent of miſchief, that variety of ruin, that comprehenſive deſolation, which *philoſophy, falſely ſo called*, has produced in three years.

Chriſtians! it is not a ſmall thing—*it is your life*. The peſtilence of irreligion which you deteſt, will inſinuate itſelf imperceptibly with thoſe manners, phraſes, and principles which you admire and adopt. It is the humble wiſdom of a Chriſtian, to ſhrink from the moſt diſtant approaches to ſin, to abſtain from the very appearance of evil. If we would fly from the deadly contagion of atheiſm, let us fly from thoſe ſeemingly remote, but not very indirect

paths

paths which lead to it. Let France chuſe this day whom ſhe will ſerve; *but, as for us and our houſes, we will ſerve the Lord.*

And, O gracious and long ſuffering God! before that awful period arrives, which ſhall exhibit the dreadful effects of ſuch an education as the French nation are inſtituting; before a race of men can be trained up, not only without the knowledge of THEE, but in the contempt of THY moſt holy law, do THOU, in great mercy, change the heart of this people as the heart of one man. Give them not finally over to their own corrupt imaginations, to their own heart's luſts. But after having made them a fearful example to all the nations of the earth, what a people *can* do, who have caſt off the fear of THEE, do THOU graciouſly bring them back to a ſenſe of that law which they have violated, and to a participation of that mercy which they have abuſed; ſo that they may happily find, while the diſcovery can be attended with

with hope and consolation, that *doubtless there is a reward for the righteous; verily, there is a* GOD *who judgeth the earth.*

END OF THE SIXTH VOLUME.

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